BLACK MEN TEACHING IN URBAN SCHOOLS

REASSESSING BLACK MASCULINITY

Edward Brockenbrough

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This volume follows 11 Black male teachers from an urban, predominantly Black school district to reveal a complex set of identity politics and power dynamics that complicate these teachers' relationships with students and fellow educators. It provides new and important insights into what it means to be a Black male teacher and suggests strategies for school districts, teacher preparation programs, researchers and other stakeholders to rethink why and how we recruit and train Black male teachers for urban K–12 classrooms.

Edward Brockenbrough is Associate Professor in Teaching, Learning, and Leadership at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, Philadelphia, PA, USA.

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1 Introduction
"Acting Tougher"

It did not take long for Quincy Stinson[1] to come face-to-face with the unique challenges of being a Black male teacher in an urban school. In fact, as Quincy recalled one afternoon, some of those challenges greeted him on his first day in the classroom:

> The first day last year, a kid was kind of like, "You know, you kinda sweet, Mr. Stinson, you kinda soft. You not gonna be able to teach us. You're gonna be gone soon." Just like that, the very first day I came in, that was what one of the kids, who was pretty decent all along, but that's what he said to me. I'm like, if they've already pegged me for somebody who's gonna quit the first day, I gotta start acting tougher.

"Acting tougher" is exactly what he did. During his entire first year as a humanities teacher at a predominantly Black, under-resourced urban public school, Quincy was required to demonstrate his ability to keep his students in check. Battles for authority in the classroom ensued on a regular basis, especially between Quincy and the Black male students in his classes. When admonished by Quincy for not following his instructions, some Black male students would dismiss him by declaring, "You can't talk to me that way, you're not my father." Others would engage Quincy in heated verbal exchanges that escalated to threats of physical retaliation against him. Surrounded by a schoolwide culture of violence, Quincy knew of a few Black male colleagues in his building who would occasionally take disruptive male students into the hallway and either slam them into lockers or lightly punch them. Quincy never went to such extremes, but he did engage in daily struggles for power with his Black male students. All the while, it was clear to Quincy that his ability to perform a particular brand of Black masculinity was being tested. Through baptism by fire, Quincy was introduced during his first year as a full-time teacher to an unwritten yet undeniable job requirement: the ability to prove an invincible Black manhood.

The fraught participation in the urban teaching profession of Quincy and the ten other Black male teachers whose narratives are featured in this book should not be terribly surprising. As evidenced by critical scholarship on Black masculinity, a conflicted mix of fascinations and fears toward Black male bodies has always haunted Black men's navigations of American social and institutional contexts (Carbado, 1999b; Gates, 1997; Majors, 1992; Neal, 2013; Richardson, 2007), and public schools are no exception in this regard (Ferguson, 2000; McCready, 2010; Noguera, 2008). Yet strikingly, prevailing cultural discourses on Black men in urban teaching routinely underestimate, and sometimes completely overlook, how the experiences of Black male teachers may be complicated by culture-wide and school-specific anxieties toward Black men. For nearly two decades, a large chorus of educational scholars, urban school reformers, public intellectuals, community advocates, and other stakeholders has called for efforts to increase the pool of Black male teachers, which estimates place at slightly less than 2% of the nation's teaching force (Toldson, 2011). Appeals for more Black male teachers have repeatedly envisioned these men as role models and surrogate father figures for Black youth, especially Black boys, who may lack supportive male adults in their homes and communities (Basinger, 1999; Hawkins, 2015; Miller, 2016; Nazaryan, 2015; Richard, 2005; Taylor, 2016). Relying at times on patriarchal logics, recurrent discourses on Black male teachers as role models and father figures leave little room for these men to express uncertainty, vulnerability, or defeat. Moments like the ones recalled by Quincy—of authority lost, of Black masculine legitimacy impugned—fall beyond the boundaries of Black macho-pedagogical fantasies. Against a backdrop of systemic inequities that have contributed to current trends of Black educational underachievement, Black male teachers are imagined as a patriarchal panacea to the plight of Black children in America's urban schools and communities. With stakes this high, these men must remain indomitable.

To be sure, patriarchal discourses on male teachers are not a new phenomenon. As I discuss later in this chapter, contemporary calls for more Black male teachers build upon a century-long angst over the dearth of men in the teaching profession. This angst has coincided with periodic cultural panics over the state of American masculinities, sparking rallying cries for more male teachers to save American boys by modeling a rugged and reliable manhood in schools. Like male educators collectively, Black male teachers are expected to serve their students by operating as benevolent yet exacting patriarchs who can restore a normative gender order in the lives of American youth, especially Black boys. But when the logics of patriarchy and their intersections with race are called into question, the recent push for more Black male teachers

raises several sets of concerns that warrant deeper investigation. For instance:

1) Given the surveillance and distrust of Black male bodies within American urban schools and across American cultural landscapes, why is the Black male teacher triumphed by such a diverse array of stakeholders as a legitimate agent of patriarchal power? What political, pedagogical, and ideological projects are being served by positioning Black male teachers, particularly in predominantly Black urban classrooms, as surrogate fathers and role models?
2) In a society where Black masculinity is both lauded and loathed, what perceptions of adult Black men do teachers, administrators, parents, and students bring to their encounters with Black male teachers, and how do those perceptions affect Black male teachers' experiences? How do Black male teachers negotiate their relationships with these stakeholder groups?
3) How do Black male teachers' lived experiences as Black men in America inform their sense of self, their career aspirations, their pedagogical work, and their strategies for participating in the urban teaching profession?
4) What exactly does it mean for Black male teachers to serve as father figures and role models for Black children? How do these men make sense of and respond to these highly touted, yet often unpacked, expectations?
5) Are there, in fact, unique cultural and pedagogical insights that Black male teachers bring to bear on their work with Black students in urban schools? If so, how, if at all, can those insights be shared with and taken up by other urban educators?

As these questions indicate, a host of weighty concerns about the nature, trajectory, and impact of Black men's participation in the urban teaching profession resides below surface-level valorizations of Black male teachers. Common-sense rhetoric on the need for more Black men in teaching belies the political and pedagogical complexities associated with choosing certain types of adults to engage certain types of strategies to teach, mentor, and socialize certain types of children. Thus, it is crucial that calls to recruit and retain more Black male teachers be informed by critical considerations of who these men are and what they are being asked to do.

Advancing critical analyses of the lives and work of Black men in the nation's urban teaching ranks is the goal of this book. In the chapters that follow, I set the stage for and then share findings from a study that I conducted on the experiences of 11 Black male teachers who worked in a predominantly Black urban school district on the east coast of the

United States. Mirroring the questions I posed earlier, my project was driven by dual desires to develop a nuanced portrait of how my 11 study participants made sense of their experiences as Black male teachers and to consider how their insights might bring more complexity to popular and scholarly discourses on Black men in urban teaching. Grounded in life history methodology and informed by Black masculinity studies, my project enabled study participants to explain how dominant cultural and institutional constructions of Black manhood were used by a variety of stakeholders to promote, prescribe, and police their participation as Black male teachers in their schools, thus forcing them into complex negotiations of identity, pedagogy, and power. This book focuses closely and critically on those complex negotiations.

Although the 11 men in my study cited joyful and successful moments from their teaching experiences that echoed public perceptions of them as role models, father figures, and effective instructors for Black children, their detailed accounts of the contentious identity politics and power dynamics that unfolded in classrooms and hallways illuminated personal, professional, and pedagogical dilemmas that have often gone unaccounted for in portrayals of Black male teachers. Bringing these dilemmas to the forefront creates important opportunities to critically unpack certain silences within popular discourses on Black male teachers—namely, the silences around Black patriarchy unfulfilled, as illustrated earlier in Quincy's narrative excerpt. The vulnerabilities, doubts, and failures articulated by the men in my study force us to question what ideological projects would depend on the erasure of such moments from popular discourses on Black male teachers. More than simply allowing us to hear these men's stories, the narratives presented in this book help us to think more deeply about how the stories of Black male teachers may be used to reproduce—and, under different circumstances, transform—racial, gender, cultural, and educational hierarchies that both include and extend beyond the experiences of Black men in the urban teaching profession.

That said, Black male teachers' stories, on their own terms and for their own sake, also matter. A more nuanced appreciation of what these men see, hear, feel, and confront along their journeys toward and through the urban teaching profession is one of this book's most significant contributions. A major assertion throughout this text is that the identities and pedagogies of my 11 study participants did not always fit into the presumed and prescribed roles awaiting them as Black men in urban teaching contexts. The resulting dissonance between who these Black male teachers were and who they were expected to be was something that these men, in the absence of intentional supports, were frequently left to negotiate on their own. If teacher education programs, urban school districts, and other stakeholders are truly invested in recruiting and retaining more Black men in the urban teaching profession, then they must delve below

essentialist and cursory valorizations of Black male teachers as father figures and role models to attend to dilemmas around race, masculinity, and pedagogy that can undermine retention efforts. By paying close attention to moments of disconnect between dominant discourses on Black male teachers and the individual lives of Black men in the profession, this book spotlights the thorny negotiations of identity and power that must inform attempts to understand and support Black male teachers.

Black Teachers, Male Teachers

Throughout this book, I devote considerable attention to a range of discourses that shapes our understandings of and investments in Black male teachers. When discussing discourses, I draw upon Foucault's notion of discourses as "ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them" (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). Discourses are complex constellations of meaning-making that encompass what we know, how we articulate what we know, and how we influence—or even enforce—particular ways of being that fortify particular truths about ourselves and our worlds. For my analyses of Black men's experiences in urban teaching, two discursive strands emerge as particularly important: popular discourses on adult Black men in general, and on Black male teachers more specifically, that circulate in mass media and are consumed by wide potential audiences; and scholarly discourses on Black masculinity and Black male teachers that critically interrogate the production of knowledge about Black maleness. These discourses repeatedly come to the fore of my analysis and are defined more thoroughly as this book unfolds.

But before delving into deeper considerations of the meaning-making specifically around Black male teachers, it is crucial that I first highlight some broader discourses on teaching that have influenced prevailing perceptions of Black men's presence within the field. Black male teachers are situated at the intersection of (at least) two significant political and intellectual projects that target the American teaching profession: the validation of Black educators' culturally and politically mediated pedagogical work with Black students; and the push for male teachers to perform conventional modes of American masculinity within K–12 classrooms. Separate overviews of the discourses on Black teachers and male teachers are offered here as backdrops to this book's analyses of the lives and work of Black male teachers.

Black Teachers

Over the past three decades, a rich corpus of scholarship has considered the significance of Black participation in the American teaching profession. Many of the claims throughout this scholarly literature shine an

intentional light on the affordances of Black teachers' culturally responsive pedagogies.[2] In contrast to one-size-fits-all approaches to curriculum and instruction, culturally responsive pedagogies recognize cultural background as one factor that can shape how students learn and engage differently within educational spaces, and they seek curricular content, instructional techniques, and community-building strategies that capitalize on students' cultures to enhance their learning experiences (Gay, 2010; Irvine, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Scholarship on culturally responsive pedagogies has outlined several characteristics that distinguish these pedagogical approaches as responsive to students' cultural identities and backgrounds. These include a respect for students' cultures that intentionally counters deficit-oriented perspectives on racial and ethnic minority students (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), engagements with students' culturally specific modes of knowing and being when determining curriculum content and designing learning experiences (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), and modes of care that are culturally recognizable to traditionally marginalized students (Dixson, 2003; Gay, 2010; Lynn, 2006b; Milner, 2011; C. R. Monroe, 2009). These and other factors distinguish culturally responsive pedagogies as valuable frameworks for classroom learning.

Across numerous scholarly accounts, Black teachers are credited for developing culturally responsive pedagogies that allow them to effectively engage Black students. Rooted in their own daily participation in Black cultural contexts, Black teachers' communicative expressions, interactional styles, racial bonds to other Blacks, and emic understandings of Black culture are all cited as powerful tools for connecting with, gaining trust from, and improving the achievement of Black students (Cook & Dixson, 2013; Foster, 1994, 1997; Howard, 2001; Irvine, 1990, 2002; W. Johnson, Nyamekye, Chazan, & Rosenthal, 2013; Milner, 2006). Black teachers' pedagogical effectiveness with Black students is also attributed to stern, no-nonsense approaches to discipline and classroom management that mirror the disciplinary styles frequently encountered by Black children in their familial contexts, and that stem from culturally specific modes of care for Black children (Delpit, 1995; Ford & Sassi, 2014; Foster, 1994; Howard, 2001; Irvine, 2002; Milner, 2012; C. Monroe & Obidah, 2004; C. R. Monroe, 2009). These modes of care are characterized in a number of scholarly works as a family-like concern for Black students' success that ultimately positions Black educators as surrogate parental figures—or other mothers (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Case, 1997; Dixson, 2003; Dixson & Dingus, 2008; Foster, 1993; Irvine, 2002) and other fathers (Bridges, 2011; Lynn, 2006b)—for Black youth. While some works have emphasized the possibilities for non-Black teachers to engage in culturally responsive pedagogical interactions with Black students (Ford & Sassi, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2011), Black

teachers have remained by and large at the center of this literature, thus affirming the special pedagogical resonance of their culturally mediated ties to Black youth.

Along with describing their pedagogical expertise in educating Black students, the scholarship on Black teachers has also cast these educators as agents of Black racial uplift. Dating back to the late 19th century, racial uplift campaigns, often led by members of the Black professional classes, have focused on educational attainment, moral respectability, and racial solidarity as tools for resisting White supremacy and achieving Black social, political, and economic progress (Carlton-LaNey & Burwell, 1996; Glaude, 2000; Whitaker, 2005; D. G.White, 1993). Across numerous scholarly works, particularly those that focus on segregated Black schools in the Jim Crow-era American South, Black teachers' commitment to Black students' achievement and self-worth is ascribed anti-racist and pro-uplift pedagogical aims. For instance, in her classic account of an all-Black high school in segregated North Carolina, Walker (1996) explores how Black teachers articulated a "countermessage" of Black humanity and self-worth that defied the logics of Jim Crow anti-blackness, asserted the possibilities of Black student success, and stressed the need for Black youth to work harder than their White counterparts to ensure Black racial progress. Similarly, Beauboeuf-Lafontant (1999) argues that 19th-century racial uplift narratives informed an "oppositional consciousness," or a deliberate stance against White supremacy, among Black educators that shaped their efforts to subvert White supremacist messages of Black inferiority through their teaching. Echoing Walker and Beauboeuf-Lafontant, other scholars offer accounts of Black teachers in segregated Black schools who instilled racial pride in Black students to counter the effects of White supremacy (Celeski, 1994; Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Fairclough, 2007; Franklin, 1990; Kelly, 2010; Savage, 2001; Tillman, 2004), and some scholars draw connections between Black teachers' anti-racist work and the civil rights activism that transpired throughout the segregated American South (Baker, 2011; Walker, 2013). Across these and other texts, the pre-integration Black teacher emerges as a race worker whose classroom functioned as a site for resisting racial oppression.

Moving from pre- to post-integration, many scholarly accounts have portrayed Black teachers' continued efforts following de jure segregation to uplift Black youth and prepare them to succeed in the White-dominated spheres of schooling and work (Cook & Dixson, 2013; Delpit, 1995; Dixson, 2003; Dixson & Dingus, 2008; Irvine, 2002; W. Johnson et al., 2013; Milner, 2006, 2012). However, the palpable reverence for Black teachers' efforts during segregation speaks to a larger racial project behind the scholarship on Blacks in teaching.

Because desegregation efforts in the 1960s and 1970s reproduced deficit lenses on the quality of segregated Black schools, many Black teachers

lost their jobs as newly integrated schools refused to place the education of White students in the hands of purportedly under-qualified Black educators (Delpit, 1997; Fairclough, 2007; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2001). As some stakeholders contend, the loss of Black teachers and the demise of care-centered, all-Black schools have left the fate of Black children's education in the hands of White teachers who lack culturally responsive pedagogical insights and anti-racist political commitments (BeauboeufLafontant, 1999; Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Foster, 1990). In stark contrast to these White teachers, Black educators, with their ability to connect with Black students, collectively represent the promise of racial solidarity and progress through education. As stated by one Black teacher who was quoted in several of Foster's publications on Blacks in teaching, Black teachers and Black students are "part of that Black umbilical cord," and if Black teachers do not realize how they and their Black students "are of the same umbilical cord and do not strive to make us more connected to that cord, with a common destiny, then we're lost" (1991, p. 274, 1993, pp. 379–380, 1994, p. 230). Foster's reference to this comment in multiple publications underscores how the Black umbilical cord metaphor speaks powerfully to the perceived significance of Black teachers, especially in the post-Jim Crow milieu. Amidst the cultural and political dislocation pervading post-civil rights Black life, Black teachers represent an intergenerational lifeline that can reestablish Black education as a collective, anti-racist project. The "common destiny" symbolized by the umbilical cord attests to a belief in the shared plight of Blacks in America and the power of education—under the guidance of Black teachers—to collectively uplift the race.

The correlation between racial solidarity and the effectiveness of Black teachers has gained a renewed urgency amidst ongoing struggles to recruit and retain Blacks in the American teaching profession. Following Black teachers' loss of jobs during desegregation initiatives in the 1960s and 1970s, the numbers of Blacks in the nation's teaching force have steadily declined. While commonly cited reasons for teacher job dissatisfaction, like low salaries and poor work conditions, have contributed to this (Farinde, Allen, & Lewis, 2016; Ingersoll & May, 2011), so, too, have persistent structural barriers that appear to disproportionately affect Black participation in teaching. These barriers include entrance examinations that prevent access to the profession for some potential Black teaching candidates (Mawhinney, 2014; Petchauer, 2016) and neoliberal educational reforms like state takeovers and school turnaround plans, the undermining of unions, and the reliance on alternative-route teacher certification programs, all of which have had the collective impact of diminishing the presence of Black teachers in predominantly Black classrooms (Cook & Dixson, 2013; Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015; T. White, 2016). Set against the backdrop of Black students' academic plights in

American K–12 schools, the scholarly literature on Black teachers suggests that these educators can, and should, play a central role in improving the educational and social futures of Black children.

While the scholarship on Black teachers has made significant contributions to historical, political, and pedagogical perspectives on teaching, much of it has relied on two increasingly tenuous premises: first, that Black teachers and Black students continue to possess a common cultural identity and background; and, second, that Black teachers can continue to wield that shared identity and background to connect with, gain insights into, and motivate Black students. In their compelling critique of Black educational scholarship, O'Connor, Lewis, and Muller (2007) explore how blackness as an analytic category frequently ignores historical timeframe, regional location, class status, ethnicity, and national origin as salient mediating factors in Black cultural and educational experiences. Applying this critique to scholarship on Black teachers, I have noted the potential challenges posed by intraracial differences between Black male teachers and Black students in earlier iterations of my work (Brockenbrough, 2012a, 2013). Other scholars have pointed to class tensions between Black middle-class educators and the Black students and communities they served (Dingus, 2006; Fairclough, 2007) and to other cultural disconnects between teachers of color and students of color (Achinstein & Aquirre, 2008). None of these works necessarily precludes the possibilities of cultural connectedness between Black teachers and Black students, but they do raise important questions. Namely, as various forms of intraracial difference become more visible and potentially disruptive in Black communities (Dyson, 2005; Kunkle, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2007), how does the increasing heterogeneity within and across these communities shape the work of Black teachers? In what ways do evolving constructions of blackness in the United States not only enable, but possibly confound, a cultural connectedness between Black teachers and Black students? And, what are the implications for how we understand the larger racial project—symbolized by the image of the Black umbilical cord—undergirding the valorization of Black teachers' work with Black youth? To be clear, I do not raise these questions with the intention of dismissing the value of Black teachers, or Black male teachers specifically, as culturally responsive pedagogues or agents of racial uplift. Rather, what I am attempting to underscore here is the rationale for questioning the extent to which Black male teachers may continue to serve in these capacities, and may do so without contention. Amidst shifting conditions for the construction of racial identities and experiences in Black communities, American society, and American urban schools, the affordances and constraints of Black male teachers' culturally responsive pedagogies and race work warrant close attention. This book takes up that charge.

Male Teachers

Along with the research literature on the histories and pedagogies of Blacks in teaching, scholarship on men's participation in the teaching profession also serves as an important backdrop for this book's focus on Black male teachers. A significant corpus of historical and sociological work has chronicled the feminization of American teaching (Apple, 1986; Hoffman, 1981; Perlmann & Margo, 2001; Prentice & Theobald, 1991; Strober & Tyack, 1980; Tyack & Strober, 1981; Weiler, 1989), whereby shifting economic and cultural landscapes facilitated the influx of women into the ranks of the profession. This influx transformed teaching from a male bastion at the beginning of the 19th century to "women's work" by century's end. While teaching remains a predominantly female field, calls for more male teachers have resurfaced throughout the past century as educators, psychologists, policy-makers, and others have sought remedies for the purported demise of American manhood. In fact, current calls for more male teachers continue to reproduce the rhetoric of masculinity in crisis, and any analysis of Black men in the classroom must consider how the experiences of these teachers have been shaped by broader cultural discourses on masculinity in teaching. Mirroring the focus on race in the preceding review of scholarship on Black teachers, the goal of this current section is to frame how cultural constructions of gender have shaped men's participation in the American teaching profession.

At the heart of recurring discourses on men in teaching is the quest to reproduce selective notions of what it means to be a man. Scholarship from the interdisciplinary field of masculinity studies underscores the significance of calling such constructions of manhood into question (Adams & Savran, 2002; Pascoe & Bridges, 2016; Reeser, 2010). Central to this body of scholarship is what Connell (1995) definitively characterized as hegemonic masculinity, or the brand of masculine identity and expression heralded at a given historical moment as evidence of true manhood. In modern Western societies, hegemonic masculinity typically has been associated with men who exhibit "physical strength, adventurousness, emotional neutrality, certainty, control, assertiveness, self-reliance, individuality, competitiveness, instrumental skills, public knowledge, discipline, reason, objectivity and rationality" (Skelton, 2001, p. 50). Where power is contingent on a decisive and domineering manhood, the men who come closest to possessing these traits are desired, emulated, and called to lead. It is thus the approximation of a culturally esteemed masculinity, and not simply the biological inheritance of maleness, that places certain men at the helm of modern-day male domination. By denaturalizing maleness, and by attributing specific modes of maleness to control over specific historical arrangements of power, scholarly works from masculinity studies delimit hegemonic masculinity as a cultural, political, economic, and ideological phenomenon with intentional boundaries and far-reaching consequences.[3]

Calls to recruit more men into the teaching force are examples of hegemonic masculinity at work in the American imaginary. Throughout the 20th century, alarmist accounts of the "woman peril" in education—or the preponderance of women teachers who allegedly produced effeminized boys incapable of fulfilling their manly duties later in life (S. Johnson, 2008; Kimmel, 1987; Pleck, 1987; Weiler, 1989)—led to appeals for virile, red-blooded men to save boys by modeling an authentic masculinity at the head of the classroom. Artifacts like Phi Delta Kappa's *Teaching as a Man's Job* (1938) and Sexton's *The Feminized Male* (1969) underscored the need for real men to become teachers in order to counter boys' overexposure to the feminized culture of American schools. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, as academic indicators like testing scores and college enrollment rates generated new concerns about the underachievement of boys in American schools (Sax, 2007; Sommers, 2000; Tyre, 2006), and as data from the National Education Association revealed new historic lows in the numbers of male teachers nationwide (National Education Association, 2004), a new panic over the "boy crisis" in American K–12 schools sparked yet another round of calls to recruit men into teaching. In popular media coverage, this latest clamor for more male teachers has routinely imagined these men as adult male role models, effective disciplinarians, and father figures, especially for boys and for children from single-mother homes (Bolch, 2006; Gormley, 2012; James, 2013; Lobron, 2005; MacPherson, 2003; McWeeney, 2014; Milloy, 2003; National Education Association, 2004; Rowden-Racette, 2005; Snyder, 2008). It has also bemoaned persistent barriers to recruiting male teachers, including the profession's image as women's work, the difficulty of providing for families on low teacher salaries, and the threat of accusations of sexual impropriety during physical interactions with students (Abdul-Alim, 2004; Bolch, 2006; James, 2013; Lobron, 2005; Milloy, 2003; National Education Association, 2004; Rowden-Racette, 2005; Simpson, 2011; Snyder, 2008). Like past appeals to increase men's presence in the classroom, recent popular discourses on the need for male teachers cite crisis rhetoric on the plight of boys to demand a more male-centered culture of teaching. In doing so, these latest calls for more male teachers assure prospective recruits and the general public that the right men can save American boys by bringing hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal oversight into the teaching profession.

The taken-for-granted rationales behind calls to recruit more male teachers speak to the necessity of critical scholarship on masculinity politics in teaching. Outside of the United States, a substantive body of scholarly work emerging from Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom has addressed this need. Informed by conceptualizations of gender and power from feminism and masculinity studies, this corpus of literature advances four general claims regarding contemporary discourses on men in teaching. First, the panics over boys' "laddish" behaviors and

academic underperformance relative to girls, and the subsequent calls for more male teachers, reproduce patriarchal commitments to the preservation of male power while further marginalizing feminist concerns over the classroom experiences of girls and the status of women teachers under patriarchal educational bureaucracies (Lingard & Douglas, 1999; W. Martino & Frank, 2006; Mills, 2004; Mills, Martino, & Lingard, 2004; Thornton & Bricheno, 2006). Second, calls for more male teachers, along with publicly and privately funded recruitment initiatives, rely on minimal and/or inconclusive evidence of the efficacy of male teachers as role models for boys (Carrington et al., 2007; Carrington, Tymms, & Merrell, 2008; Francis et al., 2008; Marsh, Martin, & Cheng, 2008; Martin & Marsh, 2005; Sokal & Katz, 2008; Watson, 2017) and miss opportunities for structural analyses of the forces that impact boys' academic performance (Tarrant et al., 2015; Watson, 2017). Third, in the absence of critical examinations of masculinity politics in schools, male teachers may respond to the policing of their identities with misogynist and homophobic performances of hegemonic masculinity (Francis & Skelton, 2001; W. Martino & Frank, 2006; Roulston & Mills, 2000). And, fourth, schools need more male teachers to disrupt rather than reproduce hegemonic masculinity and model gender equity (Lingard & Douglas, 1999; Roulston & Mills, 2000; Skelton, 2009; Thornton & Bricheno, 2006). Collectively, this body of work has made important contributions to our knowledge of how masculinity can mediate identity, pedagogy, and power in the teaching profession.

In contrast to the literature focused on national contexts beyond the United States, a relatively small body of scholarship has provided critical analyses of masculinity politics in the lives of American male teachers. This includes works by Allan (1994) and Sargent (2001), who explore how male elementary teachers negotiated contradictory pressures to perform hegemonic masculinities while engaging in the nurturing, caring, and traditionally feminized cultures of elementary classrooms, and Weaver-Hightower's (2011) description of how male pre-service teachers responded to gender-based discouragements from peers and family members about their pursuit of feminized work. Additionally, Weaver-Hightower, as well as King (1998, 2004), Crisp and King (2016), and Sargent (2001), consider how male teachers, especially in early childhood and elementary settings, must manage suspicions of their sexualities as queer and/or pedophilic. Looking at broader cultural discourses, Martino (2008) traces the historical emergence of discourses on male teachers as role models, and he closely examines their resurgence in recent popular media in the United States and Canada. His extensive analysis reveals how role modeling discourses serve an anti-feminist project to re-masculinize schools by imagining strictly heteronormative male teachers. Similarly, Sternod (2011) explores how contemporary American media coverage of men in teaching attempts to resituate a proper masculinity

and male authority in the classroom while unintentionally creating opportunities to disrupt hegemonic masculinity politics, and S. Johnson (2008) considers how tensions between American rural life and urbanization may have informed popular discourses on male teachers in the first half of the 20th century. Overall, there are certainly fewer analyses of masculinity politics and male teachers that focus specifically on American cultural and educational contexts. Nevertheless, the works that do exist underscore the need to understand how masculinity politics shape male teachers' daily experiences, and how calls for more male teachers may advance anti-feminist agendas to recuperate hegemonic masculinity in American schools.

A larger corpus of scholarship on masculinity politics in the lives of American male teachers would afford deeper reckonings with hegemonic masculinity and its consequences in schools. Additionally, expanding this body of literature would create more opportunities to examine the intersections of race and masculinity.[4] In the extant literature, Sternod (2011) briefly considers how race alters the boy crisis discourse to position Black male teachers more as disciplinarians of, rather than role models for, Black boys, and S. Johnson (2008) briefly notes that the slower feminization of teaching in segregated Black schools produced a slower disappearance of Black male teachers from those classrooms. Sargent (2001) acknowledges the barriers that men of color face when trying to access the spoils of hegemonic masculinity, but he does not interrogate the significance of race for either the men of color or the White men in his study. Weaver-Hightower (2011) identifies his study participants as White but does not address race in his analysis, and Allan (1994) and King (1998, 2004) also leave race untouched. While the minimal or absent attention to race in these works in no way invalidates their contributions, it does point to the need for more scholarship that explores the intersections of race and masculinity politics in the lives of American male teachers.

In the case of Black male teachers in American schools, exploring the intersections of race and masculinity politics requires a special attention to the interplay between privilege and marginality. A dubious history of surveillance and punishment has targeted Black male bodies throughout American society (Carbado, 1999b; Gates, 1997; Neal, 2013; Richardson, 2007) and within American schools (Ferguson, 2000; McCready, 2010; Noguera, 2008), consequently challenging Black men's access to the trappings of (White) patriarchal power. By contrast, the male teacher, as discussed, has been repeatedly imagined as a commanding patriarch who can re-masculinize American classrooms and American boys. Given their overlapping subjectivities as Black men and as male teachers, how do Black male teachers experience the convergence of these contradictory legacies? In other words, how can Black male teachers embody the privileged, masculine authority of the prototypical male teacher when their Black male bodies represent a threat that must be

contained? How do these seemingly contrary embodiments shape how Black male teachers see themselves and define their mission? Additionally, does the inattention to racial difference in much of the scholarly literature cited suggest that the hegemonic masculinity ascribed to male teachers is an extension of whiteness? If so, are the popular media coverage and growing body of scholarship specifically on Black male teachers, both of which are examined in Chapter 2 of this book, merely attempts to recast male domination in the classroom in blackface? To be clear, I raise these questions here—just as I raised questions in response to my earlier review of the scholarship on Black teachers—not to dismiss the need for male teachers, or Black male teachers in particular. Instead, my intention is to question, and possibly reimagine, the logics upon which that need is often articulated. If hegemonic masculinity is not presumed as a pedagogical good, what becomes possible for Black men's participation in the teaching profession? This question is crucial for ongoing scholarly inquiries into the lives and work of Black male teachers, and it is considered closely in this text.

Origins of the Project

It happened one morning during my second year as a middle and high school history teacher at an independent school in New York City. While conducting a routine homework check in my first period class, I admonished a Black male student who was engaged at the time in some form of tomfoolery. As I continued checking assignments, I heard this student mumble something under his breath: "batty man." For a few moments, all I could do was stare at the Coke can and half-eaten bagel on my desk. "Batty man," a Jamaican epithet for homosexual men, was infamously popularized for American audiences in Buju Banton's, 1992 reggae song, "Boom Bye Bye," in which the unapologetically homophobic rasta chanted "boom bye bye inna batty bwoy head" (Myrie, 1992). (Rough translation: Shoot a gay man.) This student, who happened to be of Caribbean descent, belonged to a cadre of Black and Latino boys who had subtlety yet routinely taunted me for my heretofore unannounced queerness. About three or four seconds passed until I caught my breath, turned to the student, and asked him in an unavoidably menacing tone, "What did you call me?" He did not reply, but I kicked him out of my class nonetheless. Two days later, I officially came out to the school, becoming the only openly queer teacher on the faculty. And, from that point on, I never fully regained the favor of some of those Black and Latino male students.

A radically different story unfolded three years later when I served as a faculty chaperone for a trip to a student diversity conference in San Francisco. On the final evening of the trip, my faculty colleagues and I treated our cohort of New York City student delegates to a touristy feast near the city's famed Chinatown district. One of the students on the trip was