Needles in a Haystack: An Exploratory Study of Black Male Teachers in England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal:</th>
<th>Management in Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript ID</td>
<td>Draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript Type</td>
<td>Original Manuscript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords:</td>
<td>BAME, Black teachers, Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, Agency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abstract: This paper draws on a study of black male teachers who teach in primary schools and aims to contribute to studies of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) teachers. Interviews with 10 participants examine the nexus of professional and social identities and how these are (re)constructed in or by schools. The teachers’ agentic actions provide insight to the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and class and point to the ways that social and professional identities are in a constant state of (re)formation as black male teachers traverse (and tip-toe) within and between social and professional contexts. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality explore teachers’ racialised experiences and perceptions of black male primary school teachers. Findings suggest that black male teachers agentic actions support them in (re)constructing their professional roles and in the negotiation of their identities in primary schools.
Needles in a Haystack: An Exploratory Study of Black Male Teachers in England

Abstract

This paper draws on a study of black male teachers who teach in primary schools and aims to contribute to studies of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) teachers. Interviews with 10 participants examine the nexus of professional and social identities and how these are (re)constructed in or by schools. The teachers’ agentic actions provide insight to the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and class and point to the ways that social and professional identities are in a constant state of (re)formation as black male teachers traverse (and tip-toe) within and between social and professional contexts. Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Intersectionality explore teachers’ racialised experiences and perceptions of black male primary school teachers. Findings suggest that black male teachers’ agentic actions support them in (re)constructing their professional roles and in the negotiation of their identities in primary schools.

Keywords: Black, male teachers, critical race theory, intersectionality, agency

Introduction

Whilst there has been research into the experiences of BAME teachers and BAME women teachers in the UK (McNamara, Howson, Gunter and Fryers, 2010; Wilkins and Lall, 2011; Hargreaves, 2011; National Union of Teachers (2017); NASUWT, 2017), little is known about the specificity of black male teachers as their perspectives. As a result, it is fair to say that their views are often obscured - indistinct from the experiences of male teachers per se or homogenised into discussions of the ‘ethnic minority’ experience. Where black males are included in research studies their experience is reported with caution due to small sample sizes and concerns about generalisability. Thus, Ellison’s (1965) depiction of the invisible black man is apposite, narratives of Black male teachers in the England are overwhelmingly invisible and silent.

1 The term ‘black’ is used here to describe those whose ancestry is located in the African diaspora. The author acknowledges that ‘black’ is used in a political sense to describe visible minorities who self-identify as other than white. In this paper both terms are used interchangeably. In the UK the terms Ethnic Minority, Black Minority Ethnic (BME) and more recently Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) have also been used at various points to refer to those considered as coming from ethnic minority groups.
Given the dearth of research in England this paper draws from the USA and North America (Lynn, 2006; McNeil, 2011; Brockenbrough, 2012a, 2012b; Lewis & Toldson, 2013; Bhopal, 2015) to examine how social and teacher identities are (re)established and (re)formed in the early phases of black male teacher careers. The study reported here privileges and foregrounds the voices of Black males as they seek to establish themselves in the teaching profession and illuminates the labour they expend in (re)negotiating their social and professional identities in schools. Extant research whilst providing insight to the experience and perspectives of BAME teachers in general, reveals only a sketchy outline of the perspectives of black men who are often conceptualised as peripheral to learning and teaching, primarily in relation to learning and/or behaviour support.

Over the years there have been calls to increase the number of black male teachers in schools. Abbot (2002) for example, argued that Black boys need more male role models in school to help them overcome underachievement. Whilst, Holley (2007) noted that “male teachers from ethnic minorities make excellent role models and are in great demand” (c.f. Maylor, 2009 and Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). Johnson (2009) too, asserts that "Barack Obama-style inspiration" is necessary for tens of thousands of children in the capital (London) suffering from a lack of drive and ambition. More recently, there have been concerns regarding the low numbers of black males in leadership roles, prompted by the fact that there were only 30 black male headteachers of Caribbean backgrounds in England in 2011. More recent statistics show that 93% of all headteachers are white (DFES, 2016). Black male teacher perspectives are rarely discussed in career pipeline studies, as knowledge producers or as those who lead schools (xxxxxxxxxx, 2018).

The call for black male teachers is often connected to their status as role models and as an antidote to the issues facing black boys. This often positions them as super-heroes. Put simply, more black teachers = higher achievement outcomes + lowered exclusion rates+ increased aspiration and so on. The super-hero metaphor is often utilized to illustrate the potential impact that the qualities of a former US president could have on pupil outcomes (c.f. Gunn Morris & Morris, 2013). Whilst the
aspirational expectations expressed in the sentiment are not without merit, it reduces the role of black male teachers to arbiters of educational inequality whilst simultaneously disavowing the education system (and schools) of their responsibilities to all children. The super-hero metaphor elides black men’s professional knowledge and status conferring additional responsibilities upon them. Black male teachers thus, are positioned as saviors, able to remediate and make good the alleged failings of black boys and their families where historically the education system has failed. Notwithstanding, the number of black male teachers, at all phases of the career trajectory in England is overwhelming low and, if the aspiration outlined above were to be achieved by black males alone it would take hundreds, if not thousands of years, to achieve.

Similar aspirational sentiments are observed in the US literature, prompting researchers to assert that whilst black males are encouraged to enter teaching on the basis of their racialized identity they are pushed out when they begin to voice dissatisfaction. Referring to this process as ‘double-talk’, Pabon (2016) argues that, “even in the midst of being conceptualized as Black Supermen [black males] are undersupported and being pushed out of the very schools that claim to need them so much” (see also Jackson, Boutte and Wilson, 2013). Black male teacher presence in school according to Lynn (2006: 2005) reflects what is described as a “a continuum between resistance and accommodation to white patriarchal norms and practices as a way in which to survive the profession”.

**Black male teachers**

Thomas and Warren (2017: 87), argue that “when an African American man decides to teach, his presence in the classroom is laudable, yet the conditions under which he teaches are often troubling and precarious”. In a study of the navigational strategies adopted by an African American teacher, Thomas & Warren found that the teacher perceived his experiences in the professional learning community as racially hostile and marginalising. In the US against a backdrop of White supremacy critical theories are used to examine the lives of black male teachers (Lewis 2006; Lynn 2006a, 2006b; Lynn and Jennings 2009; Brockenbrough 2012a; Brown 2012; Brown
2014; Pabon 2016, 2017; Woodson and Pabon 2016). These studies highlight the intersections of race and gender affording insights to the lived experiences of black males. Lynn (2006b) for instance, draws on experiential knowledge (a tenet of CRT) to identify the everyday tensions and achievements through the use of narratives. Research that addresses the experiences of black males in the US examines access, approaches and strategies for recruitment and retention (insert some refs); research which concerns black males as role models and their pedagogies and practices. These studies have challenged widely held beliefs about teaching, race, and gender through the privileging of experiential knowledge and black male teacher voice (Pabon, 2016). As this paper concerns the experiences of black males in England, the literature review will focus on the latter two points mentioned above.

The commitment to teaching and the advancement of black youth is highlighted in Lewis’s (2006) study illuminating a desire of black male teachers to be more than just role models for black youth. Another aspect of the role modelling discourse positions black males in the role of disciplinarian. Brown (2012) for example, highlights teacher’s understandings of their roles and this is juxtaposed against the tensions they face when positioned as disciplinary figures in school. Brown argues that this positioning fails to acknowledge the pedagogical work of the teachers through its over-emphasis on their racialised and gendered identities. Martino & Rezai-Rashti (2010) draws on feminist, queer and anti-racist theory to explore how an African Caribbean teacher understood role-modelling. They argue that the discourse on black male teachers requires a disarticulation to one which is more nuanced and which challenges the often cited trope that couches the potential of black male teachers within a discourse of role models. Brockenbrough (2011) examines the gendered participatory politics of 11 black male teachers and concludes that research has failed to take account of the inattention to male privilege (see also Foster and Brockenbrough, 2012); black men’s conflictual encounters with white women and black males desire for male-oriented spaces and conversations. In another study Brockenbrough (2012a) points to the experiences of black queer male teachers, arguing that being marked as queer carried with it a heavy burden, one that is a consequence of homophobic surveillance. He drew specific attention to the closeted participation of black queer males, their experiences of the classroom as a
closed space and the classroom as a site of teacher-pupil power struggles concluding that more research was needed to go beyond theoretical blindspots and underexamined areas such as the policing of queerness and the production of masculinity. Brockenbrough (2012a; 2012b) challenges the view that more black male teachers are required in schools as ‘otherfathers’ (a term coined by Lynn, 2006). He attests that:

“As popular discourses continue to construct Black male teachers as father figures for Black youth, what happens when these men, dutifully answering the call to embody and perform conventional modes of manhood in the classroom, encounter the gendered power dynamics and professional culture of a traditionally female workplace” (Brockenbrough, 2012c: pg.2).

Another strand of US research has emphasised black male teacher’s pedagogy and practice and its impact on classroom learning. Lynn (2002) utilises Critical Race Theory (CRT) to examine the perspectives of black male teachers in schools. He notes in particular, the role of black male teachers have as change agents, with responsibilities as role models and their ability to relate to African American youth. The teachers in this study understood the connection between teaching and social change and saw teaching as a call to change the lives of disadvantaged African American students. In this study blackness and maleness were seen as assets and not liabilities. In a later studies Lynn (2006a, 2006b) draws attention to the marginalised position of black male teachers in discourses about learning and teaching, arguing that they demonstrate a unique kind of cultural competence that extends to an understanding of children’s cultures and their day-to-day lives. Lynn notes that black male teachers “tend to view teaching as a form of ‘racial uplift’, and that they are important in helping black males to ‘navigate the culture of power’ (2006b: 239). A later study by Brown (2009) contends that African American male teachers are “constructed as a monolith, without much recognition to the varied perspectives and beliefs that he might employ to work with African American male students”. His study found that whilst teachers were committed to radically altering the educational outcomes of African American males they did so in different ways. Brown challenges the “one-size-fits- all logic when thinking about teachers who could effectively meet the needs of historically underserved populations of students” (pg. 489).
Whilst research in the US and North America has shed light on the experiences of African American teachers, little is known about why black men enter teaching or of their experiences in England (Roach, 2005). Even less is known about the ways in which their professional and social identities are (re)constructed in or by the institutions in which they work. In primary schools’ male teachers are low in numbers and this number is lower still for BAME men. By dint of their occupational choice black male primary teachers inhabit a predominately classed, raced and gendered education space. By examining their agentic actions it is possible to provide clearer understanding of their intersectional experiences as well as point to the ways that black males’ social and professional identities are formed as they traverse boundaried social and professional contexts (XXXXXXX, 2018). This study thus sets out to add a new dimension to the debate on BAME teacher experiences by considering directly the experiences and perceptions of Black male primary teachers.

The research

The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of 10 early career black male teachers. Three research questions guided the study:

1. Why do black men become teachers?
2. In what way are their experiences of training and their early careers inflected by and lived through the lens of race?
3. How are their multiple social identities constructed by the education spaces in which they learn and teach?

The findings reported here draw on face-to-face life history interviews with 10 teachers. The participants self-identify as Black Caribbean and were accessed through the author’s professional and personal networks. Life history methodology is used to capture, at a deep level, the complex and multiple ways in which the social construction of identity evolves over time whilst being cognisant of the social and structural context within which the individual (re)shapes their life (Goodson, 2013). Methodological analyses of the transcripts are informed by Gunaratnum (2003) who asserts that race and ethnicity are in a constant state of intersectional production.
Participants were interviewed twice – once nearing completion of initial teacher training and again 18 to 24 months later. Interviews were transcribed and coded using a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Several themes emerged from the data including: the influence of family and community; educational experiences; teaching as a career choice; race salience in academic and professional learning; purpose and values and aspirations for the future. This paper however, reports on the salience of race only. Ethical clearance was obtained via through the authors employing institution. Additionally, informed written consent was received from participants who were also aware of their right to withdraw at any time.

Positionality
As a Black woman teacher educator, I was both an insider and outsider in the study. I was an insider due to my ethnicity and the fact that I shared similar cultural experiences to the participants. I was also an outsider, due to my professional role as a teacher educator, my age and gender were different to the participants and, as such, might influence the data elicited. I used my personal experience both as a former school teacher and teacher educator to conceptualise a study that would examine the experiences of black male teachers and reveal how they found “ways to escape from, survive in, and/or oppose prevailing social and economic injustice” (Hill Collins, 2000, pp. 9). I considered too, the fact that the participants might be less inclined to share their stories with me than they might with a man and thought carefully about the issues I might face from collecting narratives from participants who are invisible, quiescent and whose experiences of being schooled and of teaching in England would be markedly different to my own. I was cognisant also that their stories might prove difficult to tell.

Methodology
Critical Race Theory (CRT) is deployed as the primary methodological and analytic tool through which to explore racialised, gendered and classed subjectivities. CRT emerged from Critical Legal Studies in the USA (Crenshaw, 1989) and is used to foreground the salience of race in the teacher's professional lives and to
contextualise this historically and contemporarily. CRT originates from the USA, but its use in the UK has grown in recent years (Chakrabarty, Roberts and Preston, 2012; Gillborn, 2005, 2006, 2013, 2014, 2015; Hylton, 2012; Housee, 2012; Rollock, 2012; Warmington, 2012). At its core is the contention that racism is endemic, institutional and systemic - it is normal, ordinary, not abhorrent and integral to the way in which society works (Bell, 1992; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). CRT analysis provides a framework for a race conscious examination of structural racism. It does not set out to find answers but instead exposes issues, revealing the overt and covert ways that racist ideology, structures and institutions create and maintain racial inequality. As such, it is a helpful tool in which to examine questions of epistemology, knowledge production and dissemination. CRT critically examines master (or dominant) narratives that are reproduced and the counter-narratives that are silenced. Based on five key tenets, CRT focuses upon: the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; the challenge to dominant ideology; a commitment to social justice; the centrality of experiential knowledge and; the interdisciplinary perspective. It is not my intention to rehearse the detail of CRT here as these are examined elsewhere (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller and Thomas, 1995; Taylor, Gillborn & Ladson Billings, 2009; Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010). Rather it is my intention to highlight the tenets of CRT that are salient and have greater significance to the study at hand, notably that (a) racialised identities are central to and intersect with black male teachers’ experiences in school; and (b) foregrounding the experiential knowledge of black men as contingent to understanding the manifestations of multiple discrimination (Rollock, 2012). It illuminates how race is inscribed, assigned, taken up and resisted by black male primary teachers in their places of learning and work. In this sense, CRT exposes whiteness as a system of meaning about race, ethnicity, class and gender (Leonardo, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2010).

In addition, an intersectional lens is adopted to emphasise the way in which people are characterised by their complex multiple identities, thereby promoting a greater understanding of the complexities posed by different axes of differentiation (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Hill Collins, 2000). Used in this way intersectionality can be deployed to identify the ways in which subtle, hidden and structural systems of power and
control combine to produce ‘intersectional invisibility’ (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), and illustrate how singularly, and in combination, structural systems of power impact upon black male teachers. Located in the field of black feminism intersectionality illustrates how the lives of black women are qualitatively different to those of white, middle class feminists and black men. hooks (1984: 194) and Crenshaw (1989) argue that “intersecting patterns” of racism and sexism often produce the experiences of women of colour and illuminate these experiences as both multiply subordinated and different. The utility of intersectionality nonetheless, has expanded beyond the specificity of black women to encapsulate the experiences of other marginalised groups, including minoritised men (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Bowleg, Teti, Malebranche & Tschann, 2013). hook’s (ibid) argues that it is in the social realm that racist and gendered stereotypes are continually utilised for black women. This observation, I suggest also holds particular salience for black women and black male teachers. As Roach (2005) attests:

“the expression of the professional and political orientation of the teacher is informed by the actuality of the teacher’s lived experience which shapes not only her/his identity but also identification. This has implications for what is expected of black teachers and men who teach” (pg. 335).

Similarly Mirza, (2009) suggests that intersectionality is both embodied and lived. Here the lived experience is ‘an interpretation of the social world’, in which regulatory discursive power is performed or exercised in the social world and across space and time. Along with CRT, intersectionality provides a prism to explore the ways in which black male teachers negotiate the education landscape of schools. Both provide the analytical tools to emphasise the way in which people are characterised by their complex multiple identities and promote a greater understanding of the complexities posed by different axes of differentiation. Due to the exigencies of word limits however, it is not possible to do justice to an exhaustive coverage of CRT or intersectionality here.

Findings
It is important to note that not all of the teachers in the study shared the same experiences. Racialised, gendered and classed experiences were situationally contingent, affected by contexts of professional learning to lesser or greater degree and related to how the teachers understood and experienced ‘race’. The intention here therefore, is not to draw generalised conclusions but instead to illustrate the ways in which race was interpreted, ascribed and resisted reflecting what Lynn (2006) describes as a “a continuum between resistance and accommodation to white patriarchal norms and practices as a way in which to survive the profession”.

He’s only here because he’s black

Despite holding the necessary qualifications and experience to teach some participants reported that ‘proving’ their credentials is essential in order to be considered as an authentic trainee or qualified teacher Authenticity here, relates to whether black males racialised identities were in concert with the roles they inhabited, the extent to which it was necessary to differentiate one’s social identity in order to disassociate from hegemonic perceptions of black males and the ‘additionality’ that was needed in order to demonstrate professional standards. For Shawn, who qualified via an employment-based route to teaching, it was important to put effort into proactively demonstrating his abilities as a teacher as this was one way of garnering professional recognition:

Some might think ah… he’s only here because he’s black. He’s the token black guy. So I thought I had to prove myself, that I was as worthy as them. You know…as clever as them. I did feel I had to prove that I wasn’t there because I was black. I was a teacher first. At first I felt like that but towards the end I got the respect from them.

For David, a newly-qualified teacher who obtained a PGCE from a prestigious teacher education institution, his authenticity as a trainee teacher was questioned by peers. He notes that “everyone said, you know. How did you…like you’re kind of…. on the outside”. The question of whether he was ‘in the right place’ positions David outside of the academic sphere of learning and outside of his role as a trainee teacher. Both Shawn and David are othered, their presence considered a form of
affirmative action or constructed as imposter whose “outsider” status is created in the minds of those whose perceptions of what it means to be a teacher do not extend to the bounds of race.

Tyrone, on the other hand, an Early Years teacher who taught in the area where he grew up, worked hard to resist and disassociate himself from popular caricatures of black males. Tyrone went to great lengths to dress the part at his place of work and to be seen as different to other black men. Professional attire and deportment was one way of achieving this:

I’m the only person in school who wears a tie and trousers. The headteacher doesn’t wear a tie. I present myself in a way... especially to let them know. That look. I’m a black guy but I’m a teacher first and foremost. That’s something I do.

‘Dressing the part’ was a pragmatic strategy both to differentiate and disassociate himself from ‘other black guys’:

I think people are just going to look at me the way they just look at any other black guys from outside the barber shop with their baggy jeans and trainers and I think they’re going to see... that’s to say this is what you’re really like.

‘I’m a teacher first and foremost. That’s something I do’, reflects Tyrone’s desire to present a teacher identity that is not inflected by race. He is acutely aware of the ways in which his racialised identity gains prominence, how he is judged by his colleagues but also how he is perceived in the community by black guys in baggy jeans. Tyrone resists the ascription of the ‘token black guy’ and uses agentic strategies in the form of dressing the part, to counter hegemonic discourses.

We need black male teachers

Participants were conscious that they were considered as assets in some schools. In contrast to the token black guy narrative Joshua, recognised that the scarcity of black male teachers resulted in some schools being more inclined to employ them than others:
I think people are ...depending on what school you go to...people are bending over backwards to get black male teachers, or competent Black male teachers. I’d say it depends on what school you do to.

Shawn too, considers his teaching post as being associated with the added value he offers. The area in which he works has a high ethnic-minority population and the local authority has been proactive in recruiting teachers who reflect the communities it serves:

I think the headteacher has chosen me because she sees my value. I’m valuable to her, that’s why she headhunted me. I think it comes from knowing that because we need black teachers in schools right here in [name of local area].

The extracts above speak to a narrative which emphasises a need to recruit black male teachers solely on the basis of a racialised and gendered identity. For Joshua, this is secondary to his capability as a teacher. In a similar vein, Charles agrees that more black male representation is beneficial. His rationale is similarly constructed by the view that, as a teacher, the capacity to carry out the role to a high standard is critical:

I do believe that we need to have more black men in the professions – period. I don’t believe that we need to have black men in there for us to see role models. When a young kid wants to be a footballer, he doesn’t look at black footballers, he looks at the best footballers. People don’t say I want to find a black businessman, they say I want to be Bill Gates, I want to be Steve Jobs.

Charles was clear that his race was not the only aspect of identity, ‘I identify myself as a black man but the way I live my life is as a competitor. I do that because I don’t want the fact that I am black to be an issue in any decisions I choose to make’. Charles is aware of the power of an ascribed identity stating that ‘they’re going to put you in that category’.

I had to come and see you
Perhaps one of the areas where racialised and gendered identities are most apparent is in the realm of perception. Participants were acutely aware of how societal representations of black males affected their day-to-day lives in schools. Wayne, a privately educated, Graduate Teacher Programme trainee, spoke about the way in which he was ‘policed’ and ‘monitored’ due to a presumption that he was “yard man” (a person who lives in a deprived area and involved in criminality). His classed identity was elided and unrecognised by colleagues. Earl too, recounted how the perception of the angry black man was ascribed:

I spoke earlier about people in my school feeling threatened by me. Whenever I disagreed about anything or had had a conversation with someone when we weren’t on the same page it was always reported that I was angry. It’s quite frustrating when people tell you how you feel.

He goes on to state:

I understand now it was about fear and it was a lack of understanding. I feel as black males we are misunderstood. The vast majority of the population do not have interactions with us socially or personally. What is perpetuated in the media, film, the news, Crimewatch is one of aggression or violence, intimidation, criminality and so forth.

The racialised stereotype of the angry black man is a recurrent theme in the lives of black males. Writing on the implications of gendered racism in the workplace, Wingfield (2005:201) posits the view that:

For Black professional men, experiences with gendered racism also took the form of encounters with controlling images, though not the ones Collins (1990, 2004) describes. Instead, they faced a new controlling image - that of the "angry Black man". The existence of these controlling images also structures the ways in which Black professionals - both men and women - respond to encounters with gendered racism.

The perception of a black male teacher extends beyond the purview of those who work in schools and may also include parents. Joshua recalls a meeting with the parent of a white pupil in his class during teaching practice. The school is located in a predominantly white area and this is reflected in the staff. Joshua
was one of three males and the only black teacher. He comments that ‘everywhere I go I feel that the way I look, and I’ve been told – until somebody gets to know me, I am intimidating. I’m 6ft 3, I’ve got [dread] locks which I’m not going to cut for the sake of it’. He described an occasion where the children were being dismissed at the end of the day. Unexpectedly a mother of a child ran up to him announcing:

I had to come and see you. My daughter came home and she told me that this big black guy with really big hair was working in her classroom and I had to come and see. It’s really nice meeting you. All of the kids are talking… the way they talk, there’s nothing malicious.

Referring to ‘this big black guy’ reveals a desire to meet Joshua which is not necessarily concerned with his ability to teach (would she have wanted to meet her child’s teacher if he had been described as ‘a big white guy’?) but with his racialised and gendered identities - as well as his physicality. By putting her child’s (as well as the other children’s) ‘talk’ in context it has allayed the parent’s fears and ostensibly puts her at ease. Such daily seemingly normal interactions can, it may be construed as microaggressions, everyday verbal and non-verbal communications that snub, slight or insult intentionally or unintentionally. Microgressions are specifically targeted at those who are from marginalised groups – in this case black males. Rollock (2012: 517) describes racial microaggressions as ‘subtle and insidious, often leaving the victim confused, distressed and frustrated and the perpetrator oblivious of the offense they have caused’. An alternative explanation is what Newman (2005) terms “identity bruising”, a form of "knock-back" that takes place in the work of men in primary schools and occurs when one’s sense of identity is ascribed by another. Whilst not referring specifically to race, “identity bruising”s take many forms: including, the perception than men are good role-models, that there may be something sinister about men who choose to work with children (particularly those in the early years) and that some men embody a “thug identity”.

**Summary and Conclusion**

This paper highlights the experiences of black male teachers in England. The men presented in this paper whilst sharing similar racialised and gendered identities
experienced learning in professional contexts in a variety of ways. They were conscious that they were in demand and, at the same time, a scarce resource and went to additional lengths to foreground their capabilities as teachers.

Examining black men’s experiences through the lenses of CRT and intersectionality highlights the salience of race in the professional and personal lives of the teachers and the ways in which they negotiate their racialised and gendered identities in schools. The study indicates that black male teacher identities are affected by negative assumptions and stereotypes and which may impact on judgements made about their positionality in schools. Notwithstanding, these men adopt a range of strategies to counter negative or stereotypical perceptions and deploy agentic strategies to foreground their teacher identity and the contributions they make to learning and teaching. Research in the US indicates there is much than can be learnt from black male teachers, with regard to the ways that race, gender and class are experienced prior to and post qualification; how their experiences may be impacted by employment-based or university-based training routes and, whether dominant role modelling discourses might influence black men’s day-to-day experience in school. Attention to the ways in which schools might engage in “double-talk”, a situation that creates the conditions which position black males as needed but a rare, elusive resource, is a useful starting point, one which moves beyond a unitary conceptualization of what it means to teach while male and black.
References


McNamara, O., Howson, J., Gunter, H., and Fryers, A. (2010) The leadership aspirations and careers of black and minority ethnic teachers. NASUWT and National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services


National Union of Teachers (2017) Visible and Invisible Barriers: The Impact of Racism on BME Teachers. NUT/Runnymede


Taylor, E., Gillborn, D. & Ladson-Billings, G. (eds)(2009) Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education. New York: Routledge. This is the first collection to bring together key writings in both legal and education CRT.


