Critical Race Theory and Critical Communication Pedagogy: Articulating Pedagogy as an Act of Love from Black Male Perspectives

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Building upon the established foundation of research concerning the systemic marginalization of Black men in traditionally White educational spaces, this essay positions Black male educational counterstories at the center of critical communication inquiry. To do so, critical race theory (CRT) and critical communication pedagogy (CCP) are productively woven together to draw rich insights from 4 focus groups with Black male students, 1 focus group with Black male faculty and students, and 11 interviews with Black male faculty. Their reflections reveal how Black misandric ideology manifests in traditionally White educational spaces and demand that we pay close attention to what Black male students and faculty can teach us about the embodiment of critical communication pedagogy as an act of love.

Key Words: Black men; education; critical race theory; critical communication pedagogy; love

Introduction

Mirroring the systemic vulnerability of Black men in U.S. American society (hooks, *We Real Cool*; Majors and Billson; National Urban League (NUL)), the odds of earning a college degree are low due to the exceptionally high rates of improper academic preparation, poverty, substance abuse, incarceration, and homicide that afflict the Black male community (Majors and Billson; Majors; NUL; United States Department of Health and Human Services). Therefore, Black men who matriculate to college have reason to celebrate; unfortunately, their celebrations are often cut short

on traditionally White campuses[1] amidst manifestations of Black misandric ideology such as stereotypes, stereotype threat, microaggressions, prejudice, discrimination, and the normalized expectation of Black male failure (Alexander, "Br(other)"; Alexander, "Performing Negotiations"; Foster; Jackson and Moore; Jenkins; Noguera; Orbe, "African American"; Orbe, "Remember"; Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano; Steele, "A Threat"; Steele, *Whistling*). Dominant deficit and "at risk" discourse unremittingly blames Black male students for their academic struggles; in contrast, we shift toward an outlook mindful of how power, privilege, and oppression infiltrate educational spaces (Fassett and Warren, "'You Get Pushed Back'"; Fassett and Warren, "The Strategic Rhetoric"; Jackson and Crawley; Orbe, "African American"; Warren, *Performing*).

As a White woman and a biracial (Black and White) woman, our joint investment in this research is rooted in Warren's ("Reflexive") call to

> acknowledge the privilege of our labor as educators. It is easy to become bogged down with expectation, requirement, work load, and the other factors that will feel like weights on our spirit; however, these "facts" are stories that, when told, can hide the joy of our jobs…. I have recently become committed to look for the joy, the wonder, and the true generosity my job enables me to experience. (142)

Reflecting on his words, it feels important to contextualize our interest in the educational experiences of Black men. As educators, we take issue with the marginalization of Black male students on our campus and yet recognize ourselves to be simultaneously complicit within and resistant toward oppressive educational practices as scholar-activists who work within institutional confines. Returning to Warren ("Reflexive"), "The academic community is still ours to craft—and we have an obligation to craft it well…" (142). In this vein, we move forward in the hopes of inclusive progress; without such progress, at stake for us and our students is the loss of identity, agency, and humanity. Mirroring Alexander and Warren, my body is White. Her body is Brown. Our bodies are female. "Historically we are tied together in a tensive dance of difference—a struggle for power and against erasure" (Alexander and Warren 328) and John brought us together to work on and against Black misandric ideology (Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano) in the academy.[2]

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[1] Tuitt (2008) advocates utilizing "traditionally" rather than "predominantly" White because predominantly White institutions "would not include those higher education institutions whose campus populations historically have been predominantly white but now have students of color who are in the numerical majority. . . . Even though institutions like MIT and Berkeley have more students of color than whites on campus, the culture, tradition, and values found in those institutions remain traditionally white" (191-92).

[2] In an act of critical communication pedagogy, John, as my advisor and Rachel's colleague, suggested that I would be a good assistant for Rachel's grant research. He graciously suggested to Rachel that I was capable of handling this research project. Further, he was confident that I would be able to both consider my Whiteness in relationship to the research, as well as grow in my understanding of CRT and CCP through my participation. In this way, he brought us together, demonstrating that critical communication pedagogues see research and

Drawing from five focus groups and 11 individual interviews, we position Black male counterstories as a means to "talk back" (hooks, *Talking*) to normative educational practices that mark Black men as problematic. To do so, we first describe the struggles that Black men commonly encounter on traditionally White campuses. Second, we suture CRT and CCP together to productively expose the realness of Black misandric ideology toward Black men on traditionally White campuses while creating a space for their educational counterstories[3] (Bernal; Solórzano and Yosso). Next, we methodologically locate our research as a qualitative study guided by a critical impetus to address the promise of CCP. Then, we offer Black male student counterstories to highlight dis/enchanting pedagogical practices followed by Black male faculty counterstories to theorize a critical communication pedagogy of love. Finally, we close with an articulation of hope that communication scholars will continue to invest in "pedagogy-centered research" (Warren, "Reflexive" 139) to further our understanding of how communication (e.g., narrative and voice) can be understood as a means to deconstruct and (re)constitute pedagogical practices to the benefit of all students.

Black Male Students and Faculty at Traditionally White Institutions

While the majority of Black male college students in the U.S. attend traditionally White institutions, unsurprisingly, most schools report poor institutional retention rates for Black men that are considerably lower than retention rates for other student populations (Cuyjet). Powerfully noting the grave improbability that Black men will academically succeed in an educational system that we believe orchestrates their failure, Talvi says, "A black man has one chance in three of ending up in prison at some point in his life, and is more likely to go to prison than to graduate from college." In addition to the aforementioned systemic barriers that constrain Black men from getting to college (Majors; Majors and Billson; National Urban League (NUL); United States Department of Health and Human Services), Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano offer Black misandric ideology to illustrate the gender-specific ways that racism manifests to stifle Black male academic progress.

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pedagogy as praxis and reflexivity as key (Fassett and Warren, *Critical*). John's embodiment of CCP in moments such as this made him an exemplar of how imperative CCP is both inside and outside the classroom. His faith in me fostered the opportunity to become Rachel's research assistant—a rewarding, powerful, and eye-opening experience of my compliance in and resistance to traditional educational systems.

[3] In this manuscript, we use the term "counterstories" in alignment with critical race theory (CRT) scholarship. Counterstories invoke the spirit of counter-storytelling, counternarratives, personal narrative, and performative writing drawn from the realms of not only CRT, but also critical pedagogy, critical communication pedagogy, and performance studies (Corey; Delgado; Fassett and Warren, *Critical*; Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, and Peters; Pelias; Pollock).

Illustrating Black misandric ideology in education, hooks notes that Black male students, differently than Black female students, are "Stereotyped…as being more body than mind" (*We Real Cool* 33). Such stereotypes exaggerate the physical capabilities of Black men while underestimating their intellect. Various manifestations of Black misandric ideology toward Black men in education have been conceptually articulated as microaggressions, stereotypes, and stereotype threat—all of which have been argued to foster academic disidentification, vulnerability, self-nihilism, isolation, alienation, and attrition (Foster; Jenkins; Noguera; Osborne; Smith, Allen, and Danley; Smith, Yosso, and Solórzano; Steele, "A Threat"). From this vantage point, Black men can be understood as a numerically underrepresented and systemically marginalized population on college campuses.

Equally disheartening, Black men have an exceptionally low national college completion rate with only approximately 1/3 of Black men who begin college graduating within six years (Harper). Grimly affirmed at our institution, only 27% of Black men who were first-year students in 2004 graduated by fall 2010.[4] More hopeful are historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) such as Morehouse and Fisk where "64 percent of the entering black students go on to graduate within six years" (*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 95). Although both HBCUs and traditionally White institutions (TWIs) struggle to retain and graduate Black men in particular (*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education;* Kimbrough and Harper), HBCUs comparatively provide far more institutionalized support for Black male students (Dancy and Brown; Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, and Bowman; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights). For example, Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, and Bowman assert "The main draw to HBCU's for African American students is the empowering family-like environment that boasts small classes, close faculty-student relationships, and life with fewer racial microaggressions" (3).

Connecting low undergraduate graduation rates to low graduate degree earnings, "Only 147 more doctorates were awarded to black men in 2003 than in 1977" (Harper). Also telling is that Black male faculty represented only 4.4% of all higher education faculty in 2009 (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*),[5] which indicates the likelihood that Black misandric ideology transcends generations of Black men on traditionally White campuses (Guidry; Jackson and Crawley; Jones; Mitchell; Orey). In reflection on both the absence and maltreatment of Black male faculty, Jackson and Crawley assert, "institutions of higher learning are faced with tremendous challenges

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[4] This information was received via email on April 6, 2011, from the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Institutional Research and Studies office. Although our institution does not formally calculate and report graduation rates at the intersections of race and gender, this office fulfills requests for such information.

[5] Of importance to note is that 4.4% represents all lecturers, instructors, and assistant, associate, and full professors along with those who teach without academic rank and faculty status. The individual percentages are: lecturers (5.4%), instructors (6.4%), assistant professors (5.3%), associate professors (4.8%), full professors (3.0%), and Other (3.9%) (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*).

in regard to issues related to pedagogy, personal and professional wellness, and the recruitment/retention of Black male faculty" (38).

Although the field of Communication has yet to fully embrace critical inquiry into educational practices (Cooks; Fassett and Warren, *Critical*; Sprague; Warren and Fassett "Critical") or works that position people of color and Black men in particular at the center of humanizing and resistant research (Calafell, "When"; Hendrix, "An Invitation"; Hendrix, "Did"; Jackson; Jackson and Dangerfield; Orbe, Smith, Groscurth, and Crawley), slight inroads have been made into the examination of Black male educational experiences (Alexander, "Br(other)"; Alexander, "Performing Culture"; Alexander, "Performing Negotiations"; Alexander, "Performing Excerpts"; Alexander, "Racializing Identity"; Alexander and Warren; Griffin and Cummins; Hendrix, "Black"; Hendrix, "Student"; Jackson and Crawley; Orbe, "African American"). For example, drawing from Black male first-generation student narratives, Orbe ("African American") highlights the significance of communication as a means to negotiate and share understandings of self, family connections, peer relationships, and one's commitment to education. In "Performing Culture in the Classroom: An Instructional (Auto)ethnography," Alexander testifies to the significance of having had Black teachers (albeit few) himself as a student and having Black male students as a teacher. Addressing identity negotiation "as a Black male teacher (and consequently as a Black-gay-male-teacher)" ("Br(other)" 371) with his Black male students, Alexander explores the fluid process of establishing teacher-student connections amidst shared experiences of racialized oppression that are tempered by the simultaneous presence of cultural differences. Marking Black masculinity as performative, he processes through the communicative complexity of "brother status" ("Br(other)" 377) while importantly marking the intellectual promise of Black male students.

Taken together, the aforementioned research is incredibly significant as a foundational entry point into discussing Black male educational experiences through narrative and voice, and our participants remarked similarly to what Orbe and Alexander explain above. This study expands the repertoire of communication research that addresses the educational experiences of Black men by centering their reflections on pedagogy. In the next section, we position critical race theory and critical communication pedagogy as a productive alliance to theorize their reflections.

Critical Race Theory and Critical Communication Pedagogy

Coming out of law, and furthered in education (e.g., Ladson-Billings; Ladson-Billings and Tate; Tate), critical race theory (CRT) positions the interests and experiences of people of color at the center of concern. The first premise of CRT is to expose and critique White supremacy, while the second is to foundationally change White supremacist systems (Crenshaw, et al.; Delgado and Stefancic; Griffin, "Critical"). There are six major tenets that typically recur in CRT scholarship: interest convergence, color-blindness, racism as every day, race as socially constructed,

Whiteness as property, and counterstories as informative (Crenshaw; Delgado and Stefancic; Griffin, "Critical"). Of immense importance to this study are counterstories—those which run counter to dominant (read: White) stories—as a means for people of color to "communicate to their white counterparts matters that the whites are unlikely to know" (Delgado and Stefancic 9). However, such stories need/must not be solely to teach Whites about the experiences of people of color. Rather, counterstories offer people of color an opportunity to speak their own truths instead of being spoken for.

Critical Communication Pedagogy (CCP), coined by Deanna L. Fassett and John T. Warren (*Critical*), draws from the Frankfurt School of critical theory and critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren, and bell hooks (*Teaching*) to forefront the role of communication "in the persistence and maintenance of institutional power" (Fassett and Warren 4). Fassett and Warren identify overarching commitments that critical communication pedagogues embrace. The commitments include understanding identity and communication as constitutive and contextually meaningful, culture and language as central, power as fluid, and reflexivity and praxis as essential (*Critical* 39-50). In addition, CCP necessitates "a nuanced understanding of human subjectivity and agency" alongside dialogue as "both metaphor and method" (*Critical* 52-54).

While CRT is primarily concerned with race and racism in law and CCP interrogates multiple oppressions communicatively (re)produced via educational practices, these oppositional frameworks share several commonalities. For example, Simpson posits, "Critical race theory and critical [communication] pedagogy both begin with the assumption that oppression and injustice exist and are routine" (378). Furthermore, both: are rooted in critiques of culture, ideology, and power; complicate understandings of marginalization and privilege; value voice, agency, and praxis; and advocate for foundational change (Cooks; Crenshaw; Crenshaw, et al.; Delgado and Stefancic; Fassett and Warren, *Critical*; Ladson-Billings; Ladson-Billings and Tate; Simpson). Perhaps of the utmost importance is that CRT and CCP are optimistically committed to possibility, hope, and an understanding that our world as it is does not reflect the best that our world can become (Crenshaw; Fassett and Warren, *Critical*).

Using CRT and CCP, we forefront Black male educational counterstories believing that "narrative inquiry allows participants to articulate their stories in ways that are reflective of their lived experience within the specified context of the classroom" (Alexander, "Performing Culture" 308). It is not just the telling of their experiences or the representation of their voices on the page that matters but rather, through CRT/CCP, their narrative reflections emerge as constitutive and instructive with regard to pedagogy. This essay is shaped by two overarching research questions: (1) How do Black male students describe teachers and teaching practices that are dis/enchanting? and (2) How do Black male faculty embody critical communication pedagogy as an act of love? In response, through CRT/CCP, Black male students and faculty testify not only to the need for pedagogues to create nurturing and humanizing environments, but also to provide insight that shifts all educators to-

ward becoming better teachers for all students. Their counterstories encourage us to progress beyond post-racial ideology with a mindful eye toward: the endemic nature of racialized oppression; the urgency to confront the costs of dehumanizing educational practices; and the reality that Black men know more about being Black men and what they are pedagogically dis/enchanted by than cultural outsiders.

Pedagogy as an Act of Love

Focusing on love, we bring together the insights of those engaged in the struggle to achieve academic success and those who have already successfully navigated the educational system. Recognizing their different positionalities as students or faculty, we offer love as a means to counter their joint systemic vulnerability to manifestations of Black misandric ideology. Exemplifying this is Calafell ("Mentoring") who writes to her student of color "Do you know how important your presence has become to me in making this university a place I could live?" (426), followed by "the emotion and passion I had been punished for by others were rewarded by you and other students of color who welcomed the fact that, for once, the professor was a lot like them and not afraid to embrace their identities" (431). Similarly, Griffin ("Navigating") remembers as a graduate student of color that "a black male tenured professor loved me when he invited me to call during family time to introduce me to the crux of black masculinity research" (217). Bearing witness to mutual vulnerability to racialized oppression fosters rich possibilities for how pedagogical love shared between students and faculty of color can sustain them both.

Writing about love, hooks reminds us that "all the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasized a love ethic" (*All* xix). With her insight in mind, we argue that critical communication pedagogy cannot afford to be without love if it is to transformatively work against oppression in alignment with Warren and Hytten who assert, "in order to work against the dominating reproductive problematics of whiteness, we need to move people toward a new space, a liminal location where the ability to hear others is created" (335). Differing greatly from the "master's tools" (Lorde), love is a liminal space that is respectful of voice and experience. For us, pedagogical love refers to pedagogical interactions between faculty and students that foster relationships, respect, and possibilities through challenging one another without pandering. This love is not only emotional, it is honest, reflexive, and transparent. The counterstories from our participants demonstrate how they experience and/or embody pedagogical love.

Methods

A key figure in the development of critical pedagogy, Freire believed that dialogue was the "only effective instrument" in a "humanizing pedagogy" (68). Seeing dialogue as key to a critical communication pedagogy of love was the impetus for conducting focus groups and interviews with Black male students and faculty. Past re-

search identifies focus groups and interviews as a useful means to examine the experiences of Black male students and faculty on traditionally White campuses (Alexander, "Performing Negotiations"; Griffin and Cummings; Orbe, "African American"; Orbe, "Remember"; Smith, Allen, and Danley; Watkins, et al.). Mirroring Orbe ("Remember") and Alexander ("Performing Culture"; "Performing Negotiations"; "Performing Excerpts"), for us, using focus groups and interviews to foster dialogue allowed Black male voices to emerge in response to dominant discourses and pedagogical practices that ironically render them both invisible (e.g., the orchestration of low representation that often results in Black men being the only or one of few in classrooms, faculty meetings, etc.) and hypervisible (e.g., subjected to readily available negative stereotypes that mark Black men as "Other").

To recruit participants at our traditionally White university[6] located in the Midwest, fliers were posted and emailed around campus. We recruited 19 undergraduate and 10 graduate students who self-identified as Black men and ranged in age from 18-52 years old. There were five focus groups (four consisted of only students while one consisted of students and faculty); the smallest had four discussants while the largest had nine discussants (including the moderators).[7] The focus group discussions were moderated by Black male graduate students or administrators to promote cultural comfort and safety among the discussants.[8] Black male graduate students or administrators were asked to moderate since we do not identify as Black and male which we believed might inhibit participants' willingness to be forward and vulnerable in the discussion groups. Each moderator was given an interview guide that included questions such as, "Please describe the characteristics of a college professor whose classroom you felt welcome in," and "Have you ever been the only Black man in a classroom before? If so, what did it feel like?" On average, the focus group discussions lasted approximately two hours and in total, resulted in close to nine hours of transcribed conversation.

With regard to faculty, we interviewed 11 faculty members who had been faculty at the same Midwestern institution for an average of seven years and taught in

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[6] For instance, in Fall 2010 there were 15,137 undergraduate and 4,223 graduate students enrolled on our campus. With regard to racial demographics, our undergraduate population is approximately 70% White while our graduate population is approximately 85% White (Institutional Research). In fall 2010, there were 3,109 Black undergraduate and 407 Black graduate students enrolled which reflected the largest racial minority population on campus.

[7] We recognize our failure to meet the average minimum of six participants per focus group (Lindlof and Taylor) as a limitation of our study. Although we planned to have our focus groups numerically balanced, our largest focus group had nine participants while our smallest had four which reflects participant availability and scheduling conflicts that we chose to accommodate.

[8] This is not to imply that all Black males are the same from an essentialist stance, but rather to acknowledge that our study is framed around Black male experiences and that all of our participants self-identified as Black and male which created the basis for some cultural similarities (and, of course, differences as well).

multiple disciplines. The interviews were conducted one on one by either the second author or a Black male undergraduate research assistant to be mindful of how the first author's White identity may have tempered the participants' willingness to speak freely about their experiences as faculty of color.[9] Faculty members were asked questions such as, "Can you tell me about the experiences that influenced you to become a faculty member?" and "What can professors on predominantly White campuses do to help Black men succeed in the classroom?" On average, each interview lasted 1.25 hours and in total, resulted in approximately 14 hours of transcribed conversation.

Each focus group and interview was transcribed verbatim with pseudonyms that the participants chose. Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss), both authors read each transcript multiple times to form initial codebooks with emergent themes for each data set (i.e., focus groups and interviews). Our initial codebook for the focus groups had eleven categories, each with numerous subcategories, while our initial codebook for the faculty had ten categories, each with numerous subcategories.[10] Then, a team of four coders[11] for each data set color-coded the transcripts line by line using the initial codebook and eventually, through discussion and consensus decision-making, reduced the focus group categories from 11 to nine and the interview categories from ten to eight. For our purposes here, we draw upon the overarching category "Quality Teachers and In/effective Teaching Practices" from

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[9] We realize that our embodied absence in the focus groups and having only one author interview Black male faculty undermines our ability to performatively map participants' lived experiences.

[10] The initial codebook for the focus groups consisted of the following 11 categories: (1) Meanings of Black Masculinity, (2) Stereotypes, (3) Meanings of Academic Success, (4) Ways that Black Men Inhibit Their own Academic Success, (5) Mentoring, (6) Quality Teachers and Effective Teaching Practices, (7) Challenges that Black Male Students Encounter, (8) Racism, (9) Strategies for Resisting Racism, (10) Calls for Specific Institutional Changes, and (11) Miscellaneous. These initial 11 were reduced to: (1) Meanings of Black Masculinity, (2) Stereotypes, (3) Meanings of Academic Success, (4) Quality Teachers and In/effective Teaching Practices, (5) Challenges that Black Male Students Encounter, (6) Racism, (7) Strategies for Resisting Racism, (8) Calls for Specific Institutional Changes, and (9) Miscellaneous. By comparison, the initial codebook for interviews consisted of the following ten categories: (1) Meanings of Black Masculinity, (2) Stereotypes, (3) Meanings of Academic Success, (4) Mentoring, (5) The Meanings of Teaching, (6) Challenges that Black Male Faculty Encounter, (7) Racism, (8) Strategies for Resisting Racism, (9) Calls for Specific Institutional Changes, and (10) Miscellaneous. These initial ten were reduced to: (1) Meanings of Black Masculinity, (2) Stereotypes, (3) Meanings of Academic Success, (4) Mentoring, (5) The Meanings of Teaching, (6) Challenges that Black Male Faculty Encounter, (7) Racism, and (8) Calls for Specific Institutional Changes.

[11] The coding team for the focus groups consisted of both authors (a White woman and a biracial Black and White woman) and two undergraduate students (a Black man and a Black woman) while the coding team for the interviews consisted of both authors and two different undergraduate students (a Black man and a White man).

the focus groups to highlight personal stories about teachers and classrooms that students have been dis/enchanted by, followed by faculty reflections on "The Meanings of Teaching" to exemplify how the embodiment of critical communication pedagogy as an act of love resists Black misandric ideology. Team dialogue about each of these categories resulted in the identification of representative quotes across each category from multiple participants.

Below we offer the voices of Black male students and faculty as industrious expressions of intellect to contest the all too easy (and all too common) practice of educators "to rest comfortably in unquestioned assumptions" (Warren and Fassett, "Critical" 289). Encouraging us to listen and learn with humility, even when it hurts, Freire reminds us that, "Those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly" (60).

Quality Teachers and In/effective Teaching Practices

Black male students often told stories about being one of, if not the only Black male student in the classroom, and commonly, their counterstories included examples of stereotypes and microaggressions. Interestingly, when asked about classrooms and/or teachers they found disenchanting (Teachers who "Don't Really Understand Us"), they told stories about classrooms and/or teachers that were enchanting (Teachers who "Run the Extra Mile") to draw powerful comparisons.

Disenchantment: Teachers who "Don't Really Understand Us"

When Black male students referred to not being understood, they primarily referred to White faculty who, from their standpoint, make no effort to understand students who are racially and/or culturally different than themselves. Indeed, as Joe Budden, an undergraduate student, explains:

> They [White instructors] don't, they don't really understand us. And it's hard being that they're White instructors for them to understand us but, to at least, to make the attempt to understand us would go so, so, so far, *very* far, if they attempted to understand us and our situation and the things that affect us in society …then that, that can take us from here to this high [motions with hands from low to high], really...attempting to understand us and how we feel and how we think, instead of just trying to teach the class…at a certain standard that may be just geared towards White people… [For example, have] you ever…had a class where a [White] teacher cracks jokes that only White people will get…and it's like okay, it's like four Black people in the class out of a hundred, and we're sitting there like, "Huh? Like, what, what's going on? I don't, I don't understand." Because it's a joke that that majority of White people find humorous but Black people…we don't understand the joke at all. So, attempting to understand us can go a long way into helping us learn better and to progress in the classroom in general.

As Joe Budden points out, not only are Black male students feeling misunderstood, they are also feeling left out. This feeling may be indicative of faculty members ignoring Fassett and Warren's assertion that, "Culture is central…not additive" (*Critical* 42), as they do not work to actively understand their students at the intersection of multiple identities.

Feeling the absence of Black faculty coupled with the pressure of negative stereotyping, Don, a graduate student, says:

> When you go into a classroom, you, you know you don't have, it's not a Black teacher teaching that class. You come in the classroom with skinny jeans on dropped down to your ankles, and you walk into class, the first thing they're gonna think is, "This is not a serious student." …. The way you dress, the way you carry yourself means everything. If you carry yourself like a hoodlum or a thug or whatever a wannabe thug or whatever, that's how they're gonna see you. They're not gonna see you as a serious person. They're gonna think, like, "You're just wasting my time. I'm just gonna teach the people that actually want to learn." …. Or they ask you a question and you don't know it, "Forget about it. Okay, put this person aside. Put them on the shelf and teach everybody else."

In accordance with CRT and CCP, the pressure Don feels can be described as stereotype threat reproduced through communicative understandings of who people are and how they look. Steele identifies stereotype threat as the anticipation that one will be judged in accordance with a stereotype ("A Threat"). Interestingly, stereotype threat also speaks to Don's frustration with other Black male students that he perceives as responsible for perpetuating the stereotypes that he faces in the classroom.

Summarizing Black male students' awareness of stereotypes and stereotype threat is Prime Insight, a graduate student, who says:

> It seems that overall, Black men are always faced with trying to negotiate their identity when it…pertains to a um, predominantly White university, or a predominantly White institution, because of preconceived notions. So, if you come to a university, and people already have um, in the back of they mind, who you are as a person, before they even talk to you, before you even have any type of communication with them, you, you're already, in a sense, you're already set back.

Returning to Joe Budden, he also insists, in alignment with CCP, that teachers should be learning as well, which means that White teachers need to be open to learning from Black male students to demonstrate a pedagogy of praxis (Fassett and Warren, *Critical* 50). Joe Budden says:

> [T]hey [teachers] need to learn as well…[for example] when you get a class list, as a professor and doctor and teacher…you're like, "Okay, who is this?...this is a funny name. This is probably a, a Black kid," you know? I…know they do, 'cause you know they do it when they doing roll call and they trying to pronounce the names, and it's something they've never seen before and they're like, "La…La…Laquita?" You understand what I'm saying? It's like, if you do your research, if these teachers do their research beforehand, before they get to the class or during the class as well, that would help them…understand us and how to teach us and how…to take us a

step further, instead of preventing us or prohibiting us. If they do they research and understand that they're learning as well, as we're learning, and that this is a learning environment—that you can't possibly just be a teacher and not learn, it doesn't work that way, because as you live you constantly learning. To not be learning is death.

These students—Joe Budden, Don, and Prime Insight—are representative of the "They Don't Really Understand Us" stories Black male students told. These stories represent, disheartening at best and violent at worst, verbal articulations of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination in the classroom that fuel Black misandric ideology. Offering insight into how faculty can and have done better, participants also shared descriptions of teachers who "run the extra mile."

Enchantment: Teachers who "Run the Extra Mile"

Black male students recalled teachers who went above and beyond their expectations with joy and admiration. These are professors who typically work with nontraditional methods (e.g., using discussion or active student participation over lecturing), know their students' names, and genuinely express interest in their lives. These are professors who welcome students and also positively challenge them to learn, which we interpret as acts of pedagogical love. Collectively, the students' stories spoke to their desire for professors who embody CCP in and out of the classroom with tangible passion.

Cyhi Da Prince, an undergraduate student, explains the name of the theme:

> Those [professors] who actually, you know, ask about your weekend, ask about your day, you know, um, you know, if they see that you, if they see that you, your, your, your grade is falling down they say, "Oh, listen, I need to talk to you." Not …in a negative way but I want to help you rather than you know, rather than criticizing you, you know?... Those teachers that, you know, that take, you know that run the extra mile. 'Cause that's they expect us to do.

In this quote, Cyhi Da Prince highlights a professor who is interested in a student's life, and who does not let a student fall behind without a respectful attempts to intervene. This is a professor who embodies pedagogical love in the classroom from an inclusive and immediate standpoint.

Big Man, an undergraduate student, describes classes in which he is successful:

> Well, basically the classes that I could say I did the best in, the instructor actually interacted with the students instead of just standing up there lecturing to them, just act like they all listening. The teacher had actually got involved with students, made the students want to learn, made them participate, which, you have to help a lot of people in a lot of different ways.

For Big Man, a professor who interacts with and is engaged with students is motivating. Similarly, Burr, an undergraduate student, thinks that a classroom becomes more welcoming when "a teacher has the students interact with one another […and]

do work together." Charlie P, a graduate student, puts it succinctly, "I think effective teachers are able to uh, first and foremost, challenge you. Um, then being able to relate the work, and make it relevant to the student." For him, good professors not only challenge students, they help students see how the material is important in the long-term indicating an understanding of the importance of dialogue as "both metaphor and method" (Fassett and Warren, *Critical* 54).

Curtis, an undergraduate student, relayed a story about a particular class he had which was "one of a kind." With excitement, he describes his "perfect classroom setting":

> [This class] was one of a kind during my whole academic career here, uh, simply because he went beyond the norm. …he really actually valued our opinions. He valued our thoughts. He wanted to know how we felt about this certain piece of media here, how we felt about this certain topic. He wasn't just trying to teach a lecture….He wanted to know how *we* felt. He wanted to know exactly what was *our* stand on the issue.

For Curtis, this professor asked to hear students' voices as an act of pedagogical love to help them exercise their agency to engage in course dialogue (Fassett and Warren, *Critical* 52).

Graduate student Prime Insight describes the passion he sees in quality teachers: "It seems like it's something about a professor, like when a professor is passionate about teaching, and also passionate about the student learning, you know what I mean?" Sean Carter, an undergraduate student, summarizes the students' sentiments about teachers who "run the extra mile" by describing a Black male faculty member with a deep sense of gratitude:

> He's not a traditional teacher; he doesn't stand up and lecture to you. He sits, you sit in a circle and we have a dialogue about things, about our course content, which makes it easier to remember it, because he's not lecturing to us; we're having a conversation. And you can tell that he's very invested in his students, you know what I mean, and he wants to learn just as much as we do. That's the kind of teacher that's easier to be around, somebody that shows that they like what they're doing.

Sean Carter identifies what the other students did in one person: a participatory, non-traditional, invested, passionate professor who embodies CCP commitments to humanizing and respectful classroom interactions. This ideal teacher, exemplified here by a Black male professor, is mindful of who students are and purposefully labors to include the voices of Black male students.

As these students indicate, they know the kinds of classrooms in which they can and do succeed. These students shared their stories with us to voice the desperate need for professors who care about students in multiple ways. Having felt pedagogically loved in the classrooms they mentioned, it is important to note that many of the examples above are drawn from their personal narratives about being a student in a class taught by a Black male faculty member.

Being Taught by Black Male Faculty

Students identified how different (and, sometimes, better) it is to enroll in a class taught by a Black male professor. I Am Not My Grades, an undergraduate student, recalls a specific course with precise and soft-spoken admiration that highlights pedagogical love between Black male students and faculty:

> Just having someone that I could relate to, and actually go to the lecture and listen and understand what he's saying and just, you know, the way he teaches his class, it's like you know, it's more, …not so much, you know, coming straight from the book but it's more of him talking to you, like you know, actually really talking to you about the work and you can tell that he has such a passion for [name of field].

Having someone he could identify with as a Black man helped I Am Not My Grades feel welcome and involved in the class.

JJ, an undergraduate student, sees having a Black professor as having a "father figure inside the classroom." He knew that he would succeed in these classes because he knew what to expect from the professor and he knew that the professor would expect "the utmost." As he tells his story, JJ explains that it felt wonderful to have a Black male professor because:

> He was more understanding and more relatable, a Black man teaching another Black man, and he, sometimes the teacher, he'll step outside his teaching and, and come to you as a Black man, like, and … [that] feels good inside of the classroom, especially being in a society where predominately White women teach that profession... So it's… wonderful, I guess, to have, to have a Black teacher.

JJ, like his peers, understands more of what to expect in the classroom when he sees someone who looks like him teaching. Although the presence of a Black professor in a college classroom is rare, when Black men have the opportunity to learn from other Black men, it is often meaningful and appreciated. In addition, for these students, seeing someone who looks like them at the front of the classroom lessened some of their typical anxiety on a traditionally White campus. To continue our discussion of Black male perspectives on education, we turn to the interviews with Black male faculty who narrate their own pedagogical practices with a self-reflexive commitment to empowerment, compassion, and love. We also recognize, alongside student voices, that the best people who can teach us how to pedagogically love Black male students are Black male faculty who have been Black male students themselves.

Black Male Faculty and Critical Communication Pedagogy as Love

In alignment with Calafell ("Mentoring") and Griffin ("Navigating"), we position the insights of faculty of color as a means to understand critical communication pedagogy as an act of love that works on and against oppressive educational practices. Supportive of this stance is Warren, who offers, "For me, teaching as 'love' oc-

curs in two ways: First it is about meeting students where their passions are…. Second, it is about keeping us, always, within a critical context" ("Social" 25). Embodying Warren's understanding, many of our faculty participants voiced how they not only teach as an act of love, but also remain committed to critical teaching praxis through love. Important to note is that our faculty participants did not differentiate between teaching and mentoring (although many recognized that the institution does), but rather viewed them as an intertwined obligation inside and outside of the classroom. For example, Argumentum determinedly shared:

> It's not just about that semester when you're in my class,…whether you're in my class or not,…you have to understand that I'm gonna be here to mentor you. And so I, so I want you to come in, and I want you to come to work but I also want you to look up there and I want you to see that there's somebody that looks like you, teaching you, who wants to work with you beyond what's happening in that classroom.

Sharing his approach to teaching and mentoring which we interpret as "tough love" is Nova, who says:

> Anything I tell you is to benefit you, so I'm gonna tell you the good stuff and I'm gonna tell you the stuff that you don't want to hear and I'm gonna do all of that. And so the relationship that I have built with several students is really being open to listen, but I tend to be very direct with them. And for some I may not come off as touchy-feely.

Returning to Argumentum, he says the following with a sense of urgency:

> I try to give as much as I possibly can to all my students regardless of ethnicity…I mentor and I take it very seriously. And for Black males…you can embrace them and let them know that you're there for them equally as much, and encourage them and mentor, you gotta mentor. You *gotta* mentor. And challenge them to be individuals too, you know, through your mentoring.

Another faculty member, Fred, agreed with Argumentum saying, "Our desire is for kids to come here and be exceptional. That's what we, because we're Black mentors, that's what we desire." Through mentoring, both Argumentum and Fred work to fulfill Fassett and Warren's call that CCP educators should "embrace pedagogy and research as praxis" (*Critical* 50). The pedagogy they embody inside their classrooms speaks to the practical work of mentoring they engage inside and outside the classroom.

Faculty also pointed to Fassett and Warren's (*Critical*) call that CCP educators try to embrace in all settings "a nuanced understanding of human subjectivity and agency" (52). Often, this understanding of human subjectivity is related to a student's understanding of his (or her) identity. For example, Barry believes:

> I would say, I think professors in general, regardless of whether students are Black or White, need to remember that, well, need to be mindful of where the students are when they get here. And I think it's our responsibility to engage the students

> where they are and try to facilitate their development into the type of student that they need to be in order to be successful.

Barry's quote is also reminiscent of Myles Horton, who believes it is "essential that you start where people are" (Horton and Freire 99) in education.

Moreover, faculty pointed to the need for students to have space to voice opinions in the classroom. Argumentum stated that, "I start this process by telling them that I want to hear *all* of their voices, and that means the Black males too. Because we all have a voice and it's very important, so bring your voices to class and be prepared to use them." Barry also echoed this desire to hear student voices, saying:

> I actually listen to my students. I give them an opportunity to talk. I'm not up there talking *at* them all the time, you know? I tell them that what they have to say is very important, that it's part of my educational process as well, especially given the nature of the discussions in my classes, you know? And I value their input, you know, having them engage in the evolving discourse of the discipline is very important.

In order to hear student voices and to care about what we hear as Argumentum and Barry indicate, educators must utilize Fassett and Warren's (*Critical*) articulation of dialogue "as both metaphor and method for our relationships with others" (54). Engaging in dialogue means listening to others, both to what they are saying, as well as to what they may be leaving unsaid. To build a relationship based on dialogue is to build a relationship on trust, commitment, and accountability; ultimately, it is to build a relationship of pedagogical love.

Lastly, faculty spoke of their roles and responsibilities as educators, in addition to what they believed the students' roles and responsibilities are. Charles Francis firmly believes that:

> my role in life is to give young people the strategies for critical thinking, for analytical reading and interpretation of texts, of culture, and… to encourage them to become transformative members of society who will have an influence on the world in which they live.

Similarly, Gangstalicious speaks of his outlook and obligation to improve the chances of Black male success:

> I don't know if it's that cheesy like "each one teach one" or what it is. But getting people to reach back, not because you're "indebted to your people" but because you have an invested interest in seeing other people who want to do better and who can do better, do better…I think that the first step is that being intellectual needs to be associated with Black masculinity…it needs to be associated at the ideological level.

The thoughts of Charles Francis and Gangstalicious can be understood in relation to Fassett and Warren's call for reflexivity to be used in critical communication pedagogy (*Critical* 50). They are conscious of their pedagogical actions and the political significance of their Black male intellectual presence in the classroom.

Indeed, the Black male faculty in our study indicate through words and embodied praxis that a critical communication pedagogy of love is not only important, it is imperative. These faculty demonstrate love to their students by both caring for and challenging them. They have learned hooks' lesson that, "To truly love we must learn to mix various ingredients—care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication" (*All* 5). They embody this ethic each day in and through their pedagogy, and they challenge us to do so as well.

Conclusion

This essay entails a deep exploration of how Black male students experience Black misandric ideology in classroom settings coupled with an examination of what Black male students and faculty can teach us about the embodiment of critical communication pedagogy as an act of love to thwart such practices. Jointly, they voice the possibility that love "can dispel the imposition of negative difference and work against the strong tides of self-nihilism that are all too common among those who represent marginalized identity groups" (Griffin, "Navigating" 218). Through the embrace of CRT and CCP, our hope as educators is that theorizing pedagogical love from the standpoints of those who give and receive love in educational contexts helps students, faculty, staff, and administrators imagine and facilitate more inclusive educational practices.

Embracing transparency, we believe that most college classrooms, including our own at times, fail to meet the needs of students of color. Drawing from the lived experiences of our Black male student participants, they have sat in classrooms on our traditionally White campus and felt lost and excluded. As the only Black man in the class, they have had to uncomfortably ask and answer distressing questions. Arguably the most offensive to us is that they have sat in classrooms intended for learning and felt too afraid to learn. Despite the depravity in education that their disenchanting experiences reveal, we also find hope in their voiced experiences. More pointedly, because we believe that communication is central to the end of oppression (Simpson 378; Warren "Living"; Warren "Doing"), we know these stories are not told in vain should educators choose to listen and purposefully embody CCP tinged with the racial consciousness called for by CRT.

Our friend, teacher, mentor, and colleague, John T. Warren, reminds us that pedagogy can be magical when he says, "in a moment, we are transformed—lives changed as we seek together different ways of knowing and being in the world" ("Social" 22). Playing hide and seek with his memory as time goes by, we return to his wisdom often to name, confront, and interrogate normative educational practices that continually (re)position Black male students on the margins when in fact, we believe as he did, that all of our students deserve the best that critical communication pedagogy as an act of love has to offer.

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