

Applying an Anti-Deficit Based Framework to Aid in the  
Cultivation of Interest and Entry into Education, Retention, and Career  
Advancement of Black Male Educators

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## Executive Summary

Currently, Black men make up a mere two percent of America's teacher workforce and has the highest turnover rate across race, ethnicity, and gender lines (Ingersoll and May, 2011). In order to investigate the factors that inform this staggering statistic that plagues our education system, the purpose of this study is to further understand the personal and professional journey of Black male educators. In order to better understand how policymakers, education institutions, and national organizations can better support Black men, this report seeks to understand how the cultivation of interest and entry into the field of education occurs, the factors that lead to retention of Black male educators, and what aids in their advancement into education leadership roles.

Partnering with Profound Gentlemen, an organization whose mission is to build a community of male educators of color who provide a profound additional impact on boys of color, this qualitative study utilizes an inquiry-based narrative examination as a methodology in order to explore the lived experiences of Black male educators. Using an anti-deficit based framework that seeks to focus on the positive contributing factors that led Black male educators into the field and those that keep them returning from year to year, this capstone study moves away from the already exhaustive amount of research that focuses on the negative narrative that America has historically perpetuated. The anti-deficit based framework highlights the people, experiences, programs, and resources that lead Black male educators to the highest levels of leadership in the field of education.

Through extensive interviews with 22 Black male educators from across the country working in both the public and private school sector, this project illuminates the important role that Black male educators play in the lives of Black students. The first finding reveals that

for Black male educators, exposure to other Black male educators during their K-12 schooling experience influenced their decision to become educators. The second finding shows that organizations like Profound Gentlemen help retain Black male educators in the field because of the socioemotional support and sense of belonging that is experienced through its programming and resources. The final finding shows that the opportunity to build relationships, enhance human capital, and seek advice through networking, contribute to the career advancement of Black male educators.

Based on the findings, there are three recommendations for Profound Gentlemen that emerged, but these proposals can also be considered for implementation by policymakers, education institutions, and nonprofit organizations to better support Black male educators. First, Profound Gentlemen should consider partnering with the K-12 school sites of their Black male educators and develop afterschool programs organized by its members that offers career exploration, mentorship, a social justice curriculum, and socioemotional support for students. Secondly, they should consider establishing a formal relationship with a nationally recognized mental health organization to support Black male educators. Lastly, in order to support the career advancement of Black male educators, Profound Gentlemen should establish a Leadership Apprenticeship that allows for job shadowing experiences, develops emerging leaders, and prepares them for leadership.

## Introduction

### *Black Male Opportunity Gap*

For a society that claims to be founded on the idea of liberty and justice for all, the opportunity gap between Black men in America and other racial, ethnic, and gender groups illustrates the opposite. The discouraging statistics around Black male education attainment, employment, financial success, and incarceration rates indicate that this group is still characterized by their adversity and their narrative told through a deficit-based lens. So often the experience of Black male students is told through the school-to-prison pipeline concept--young boys being criminalized as early as preschool and suspension rates resulting in above average high school dropout rates. According to the Department of Education (2012), Black men comprised of 6% of the overall U.S undergraduate population. In the not frequent enough event that Black male youth matriculate into college, their overall education attainment is low and stagnant which then potentially correlates to employment for Black men also being truncated. In media, the Black man is often portrayed as villain, dangerous, more inclined to gang affiliation, and needing to be overly policed and monitored in their own communities. While the election of former President Barack Obama and the Black Excellence Movement characterized by unity, love, and support has contributed to Black men being depicted in a less threatening light, the needed existence of the Black Lives Matter movement illustrates that Black men are still usurped by the historically negative narrative created by America's history.

Despite the efforts, research, policies, and other improvement initiatives to close the achievement gap between African American men and other racial and ethnic groups, it remains wide. This perpetually wide gap remains open for a myriad of reasons: K-12 academic preparation, a history of racism and systemically oppressive systems, lack of mentorship and social-emotional support structures, and a host of other obstacles that Black men face as a result

of simply being who they are. Yet, as a society we have placed a heavy emphasis on all the factors that prevent Black male success versus shifting our research to the factors that contribute to Black male achievement. In particular, one theory of research suggests that the presence of African American male teachers in the lives of Black male students can significantly contribute to their academic success and life outcomes. Noguera (2009) suggests that the recruitment and retention of Black male educators may narrow the opportunity gap in that Black male students will have more sources of support for their aspirations and be more affirmed in their identities. This notion suggests that the cultural and structural shift that schools should make in order to positively impact the education and life outcomes of Black male students would be to more actively invest in creating a diverse work force with a particular focus on Black men. Unfortunately, the current public school workforce is comprised of less than 2% of Black male educators (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

***Profound Gentlemen: Black Male Educators***

The phrase, “You can’t be what you can’t see,” coined by Marian Wright Edelman, President and Founder of the Children’s Defense Fund, accurately sums up the mission of Profound Gentlemen. Profound Gentlemen can be categorized as a “cradle-to-career” organization in that its hope is to spark interest in Black men as early as possible to enter the field of education and support them through their professional journey in the work force. With the purpose of ensuring that more men of color enter and stay in the field of education, it is an organization that leans in on the theory that by altering the teacher landscape to include more Black men, the opportunity gap experienced by Black male students will be narrowed. Bianco, Leech, and Mitchell (2011) suggest that the Black male teacher shortage is so severe that the

likelihood of a student navigating their education career and never encountering a Black male teacher is plausible.

Without the representation of Black male teachers in schools, young Black male students are deprived of the opportunity to become the role models they see before them. With negative stereotypes clouding their self-perception both inside and out of the school walls, without Black male educators, Black male students lack the positive affirmation of their own identities in the place they spend most of their time on a daily basis from kindergarten to college. Wright (2015) suggests that the presence of Black male teachers positively contributes to the academic success of Black men as well as lower suspension rates among this group because of the socioemotional connection Black male students create with their Black male teachers. The need for more Black male teachers to aid in emotional and academic support is evident. However, even more evident is the need for Black male educators to exist in schools in order to dismantle the historically deficit-based narrative that has been perpetuated by society.

The purpose of this study is to explore how Profound Gentlemen, and organizations like it, can apply an asset-based framework to cultivate interest and entry into the field of education, retain educators over time, and support career advancement of Black male educators in order to narrow the Black male opportunity gap. As an organization that exists to promote Black male achievement, it already attempts to control the narrative about who men of color are and helps in getting the world to view Black men through a more positive lens. Through qualitative research methodologies focusing on the inquiry-based narrative exploration of Black male educators in Profound Gentlemen, the stories and lived experiences of successful Black male educators will help improve organizations in supporting Black male educators to succeed. Through exploring the key aspects of the organization that enhance an anti-deficit based narrative for Black men, the



findings will help build on the strengths of this organization as well as provide other cradle-to-career organizations with a blueprint to replicate its successes. It is also the hope that through this study of successful Black men, findings will suggest areas of improvement for educational institutions that lead to more young men entering the field of education, remaining as educators for an extended period of time, and advancing into leadership positions of impact and influence creating a lasting effect on Black male students.

### Organizational Context

Profound Gentlemen is an organization that was founded in 2015 by Mario Javon Shaw and Jason Terrell, two Black male educators who saw a need for more Black men to enter education from their own lived experiences in the classroom. Mario Shaw and Jason Terrell joined Teach for America, an organization whose mission is to place high performing college graduates in low-income communities to serve a two-year teaching commitment. While roommates during their teacher training under the Teach for America organization, they conceived the idea to start an organization that would support other Black men during their journey of navigating a space where so few of them were present. When asked during an interview why Profound Gentlemen (PG) was started, one of the co-founders, Mario Shaw stated, “I wanted to start PG because when I first started teaching, students started to say to me that they needed more Black teachers but more Black men teachers in general” (M. Shaw, personal communication, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020). After conducting a listening tour of his students, he recognized that students of color were longing for teachers who shared their similar racial and ethnic background and wondered why so few men of color were present in the field. Alongside Jason Terrell, who also started the organization with a similar mindset, the two gentlemen began their journey as educators by day and entrepreneurs by night. In just a few short years after

college graduation and full-time teaching, Mario and Jason launched the official non-profit, Profound Gentlemen.

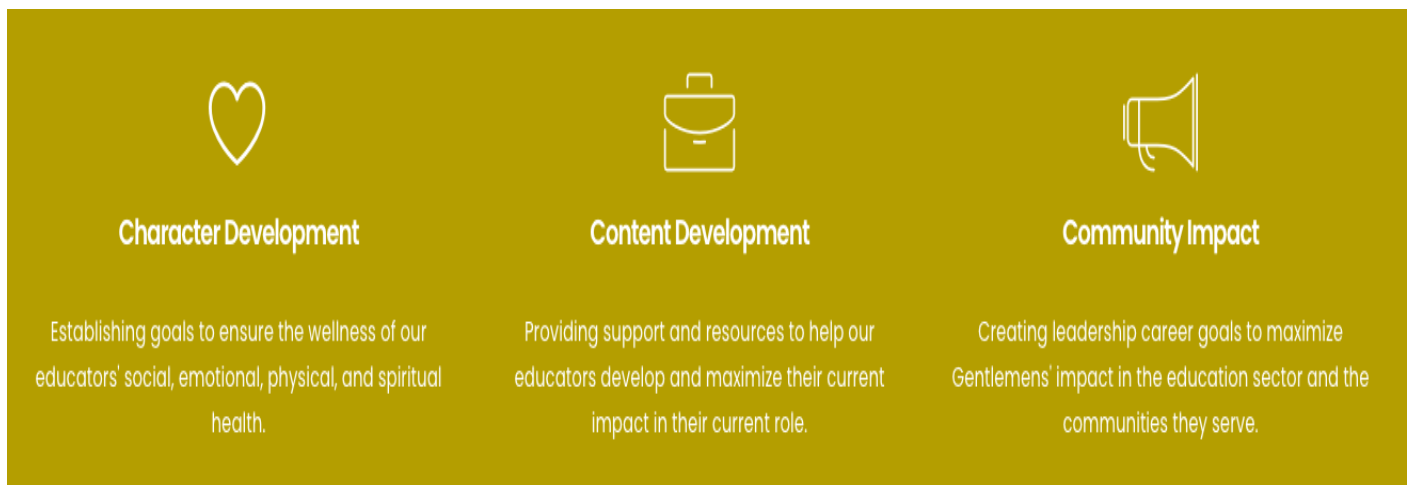
In recent years, there has been an influx of organizations similar to Profound Gentlemen that focus primarily on men of color in the classroom. However, some of these organizations, like NYC Men Teach, focus primarily on teaching pathways and recruitment efforts. While this is certainly important and offers key components of supporting Black male educators, Mario and Jason sought out to explore how an organization can support Black male educators in even more intangible ways. Profound Gentlemen takes a more holistic approach through its implementation and execution of a mission designed to support Black men from the start of their professional career and guidance throughout. The organization seeks to not only support Black male educators with tangible resources like professional development, materials, etc., but also is deeply committed to addressing the socioemotional and psychological aspects of what it means to be a Black male educator—the somewhat intangible needs that generate teacher satisfaction and career sustainability. Profound Gentlemen is an organization whose mission is to support schools and districts by creating a community of male educators that are able to enter and remain in the education workforce and thus provide a transformative positive impact on male students of color. Their vision and aspiration is to further develop an organization that is able to retain Black male educators in hopes that their very existence in schools will combat the current deficit-based narrative that permeates our society as a result of the school-to-prison pipeline narrative by establishing a “cradle to career” pipeline for boys of color. One could argue that Profound Gentlemen is among the leading organizations within its niche and is proving the possible for what it means for men of color to enter and excel in a field where less than 2% of them exist.

***Profound Gentlemen: The Model***

Profound Gentlemen places emphasis on mentorship, uniquely designed programming, and personal development for men of color starting as early as college and supports members throughout their professional careers as educators. The goal of the organization is to ensure that at least 90% of its members, all of whom identify as men of color, return year after year with stronger preparation mentally, emotionally, and professionally to excel in their careers and inspire others to enter and stay as members of the education workforce. The approach is quite simple in that current educators and those that are aspiring to become educators join Profound Gentlemen, paying a small annual fee, and are placed in cohorts based on geographic location. At the helm of each region is a cohort leader, called Impact Leaders, who are thriving educators located in the same city or region as their cohort members. The Impact Leaders serve as life, career, and instructional coaches to their members. For example, if you are an educator in New York City, your Impact Leader is someone who lives in the NYC region and has gone through an extensive interview process with Profound Gentlemen in order to be considered part-time staff and receive a monthly stipend as compensation for their extensive work. These Impact Leaders are also already established in their career as a teacher or administrator within schools in their respective regions. The Impact Leader is employed part-time as an official employee of Profound Gentlemen and is responsible for meeting one-on-one every two months (at a minimum) with each cohort member. During these meetings the Impact Leader and cohort member co-generate an Impact Professional Development Plan which includes goals and personal development objectives. Over time they meet for personal and professional check-ins to build a mutually beneficial relationship.

In addition to the very personal and supportive relationship that is established through the cohort model, Profound Gentlemen partners with organizations throughout the school year to host programs, workshops, and their annual conference which they call Community Impact Assembly or CIA. Figure 1 highlights the core components of Profound Gentlemen’s extensive programming to support men of color: character development, content development, and community impact. The organization aims to ensure that all of their programming is planned with these areas in mind to achieve their overarching quantitative and qualitative goals.

**Figure 1: Profound Gentlemen’s 3C Focus Area**



*Note.* From Profound Gentlemen website. (<http://www.profoundgentlemen.org>). Copyright 2021

Character development focuses on holistic wellness for Profound Gentlemen members; for example, this programming could be in the form of a workshop concentrating on spiritual or emotional health or it could be a group of men getting together for a physical wellness session. Content development is the component of programming that supplies resources that help Black male educators maximize their impact in their current role as teachers or administrators. Lastly, community impact focuses on ways in which Profound Gentlemen members can enhance their

leadership capacities and progress in their careers in order to have a larger impact in the education sector and the communities in which they've committed their careers.

While Profound Gentlemen has achieved a notable amount of success and consistently reach their goals, every organization can benefit from moving from good to great. This study will inform how Profound Gentlemen can maximize on the strengths that their members have identified are effective in supporting Black male educators and push Mario and Jason, the founders of PG, to think more critically about how their efforts can retain Black male educators and support career advancement. The findings of this research will inform aspects of their programming that has had the most impact on whether Black Male educators stay or leave the field — allowing the organization the opportunity to double-down on their more successful programming and revise areas of their 3C approach that may be costing more time, human capital, and financial backing than actual benefit to the hundreds of Black male educators that rely on Profound Gentlemen for support.

## Area of Inquiry

An organization like Profound Gentlemen is extremely important in helping schools and districts enhance the education experience of Black male students by ensuring that Black male educators thrive in the workforce. With that being the ultimate goal, the question to explore is how Profound Gentlemen and other cradle to career organizations with a similar mission can cultivate the interest and entry of Black men into education, support Black male educators in a way that leads them to stay in the field, and aid in the advancement into positions of leadership within education.

The former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2010) stated, “I used to go into elementary schools that did not have a single Black male teacher, though most of the students

were Black and grew up in single-parent families. How can that be a good thing for young children, especially boys?” While it is not fair to place the burden of being a “father figure” onto Black male educators, one cannot neglect the importance of navigating school with someone who shares a similar racial and cultural background. Unfortunately, in a public school system that is becoming increasingly more diverse, particularly with students of color, the lack of Black male educators is having a lasting effect on the school experience of students of color.

The first area of research I will investigate revolves around understanding the factors, specifically for Black men, that spark or prevent cultivation of interest and entry into the field of education. Some research suggest that entering education as a career is a choice that comes with low prestige, unstable work environments, and a less lucrative professional choice (Morris and Morris, 2013). Despite the negative narrative around the teaching profession, a growing body of literature suggests that for Black male college graduates, teaching is the number one career choice (Toldson and Snitman, 2010). With a deeper understanding of what life events, experiences, schooling, and other factors precipitate entry into education as a profession, organizations like Profound Gentlemen can enhance their efforts as early as possible to increase the number of Black men who enter the field. While recruitment efforts are one aspect of ensuring more Black men enter education, interest in becoming an educator begins much earlier than college years and thus investigating the inputs that lead or deter Black men from becoming educators as early as possible could shed light on what organizations and schools could do to diversify the workforce.

The second issue to better understand within Profound Gentlemen and the larger context of society is how organizations can work to support the retention of Black male educators. Profound Gentlemen utilizes the majority of their financial and human capital to solve this

problem through their annual programming and the hiring of Impact Leaders to guide and mentor current educators in their regions. The organization currently has a goal of ensuring that at least 90% of Profound Gentlemen educators return back into the education sector each year. The area of inquiry lies in further understanding what supports and programming most significantly contribute to the retention of Black male educators. Currently, Profound Gentlemen is addressing the problem of retention through one-on-one connections with Impact Leaders and by collecting data on these structures in order to monitor progress and their effectiveness. However, since the problem of Black Male educator retention is such a pervasive issue to address both within the organization and throughout the country, it is important to determine as many ways as possible to enhance the experience of Profound Gentlemen educators in order to retain them in the program and keep them returning to education each year.

Lastly, one of the more difficult problems to track and solve for is how Black male educators progress in their career into positions of leadership in order to have a larger impact in the field and in their communities. One sector of Profound Gentlemen, a category the organization refers to as “Profound Educators,” includes educators who have been in the field seven or more years and are on the brink of entering, if not already occupying, a leadership position in education, including but not limited to Dean of Students, Assistant Principal, Principal, or Superintendent. Currently, the support for educators in this group is much less intentional than support for teachers, and there is much work to be done within the organization to ensure the professional knowledge of this group is spread throughout the organization in order to support career advancement. A deep dive into understanding what factors contribute to Black male educators moving into leadership positions could help the organization learn from these experiences and guide more Black men into this seemingly uncharted territory. Additionally,

supporting these more veteran educators in staying in the field themselves is paramount to the success of all Black male educators as it naturally becomes more difficult to navigate as you progress in your career.

Without addressing these issues internally, the consequences are clear – the fewer Black male educators who feel supported within PG, the fewer Black male educators we have out in the world standing in front of the Black students that need their support. By gaining a deeper understanding around the K-12 and college experiences that spark the interest for Black male educators to enter the field, what Black male educators need to sustain their interest in the profession, and resources to help navigate career progression and professional barriers that exist for Black men, Profound Gentlemen and organizations worldwide will be better positioned to support Black men.

## Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to use narrative-based inquiry to understand how interest and entry into the education workforce is cultivated, what contributes to retention, and what aids in the career advancement of Black male educators. With a specific focus on Black male educators who are members of Profound Gentlemen, the narrative inquiry will provide insight for improvement efforts for organizations seeking to increase the number of Black male educators. There is a growing body of research that exists surfacing information on how Black male collegians explore their interest in entering a career and about the current Black male education practitioners. However, there is much less research on the recruitment efforts of Black men into the profession and the K-12 experiences that promote or impede the likelihood they become educators. It's important to explore and deeply understand these two key aspects of the literature first in order to diagnose why only 2% of Black men enter the field of education. Additionally,



exploring the literature that specifically addresses retention efforts, or lack thereof, to further understand why Black male teachers stay or exit the profession is imperative in order to land at final research design for exploring career progression of Black male educators.

***The Centrality of Race and Racism as a Hinderance***

The first body of literature that is worth investigating is centered around theories and explanations that illuminate why the shortage of Black male educators in America exists. The most recent research that is dominating this area of inquiry was conducted by David Sandles in 2020. Sandles (2020) uses the well-known theoretical framework developed by Derrick Bell, Critical Race Theory (CRT), to examine some of the root causes for why there is a shortage of Black male educators. Critical Race Theory as defined by Bracey (2015), is a “broad theoretical framework created by synthesizing the main themes of scholars who have challenged dominant contemporary understandings of race and the law, as well as other aspects of social structural inequalities” (p. 1). In other words, CRT is derived from decades of research from scholars across multiple fields and serves the purpose of analyzing historical systems, structures, biases, and ideologies that have led to the abandonment, disenfranchisement, and suppression of marginalized people. While CRT comprises a number of principles, the centrality of race and racism in society is at the core of the circumstances that led up to and continue to explain the dearth of Black male educators.

Through a Critical Race Theory lens, specifically its tenet that puts race and racism in the center of society, Sandles (2020) examines the effects of three things: (1) the normative microaggressions of white people, (2) the aftermath of Brown v. Board’s integration of schools which led to a large percentage of Black teachers being expelled from the profession, and (3) the current plight of Black men in their K-12 and college experience; each of these has compounded

over time. These three factors all contribute to the lack of interest in teaching and failure to commit to becoming a Black male teacher today. The very first obstacle that Black men face is a result of the inadequate preparation they receive during their K-12 education experience (Bianco et al. 2011; Noguera 2008). According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2015) only 59% of Black male students graduate from high school and an even smaller percentage matriculate to a two or four-year college that graduates them within four to six years. Additional research conducted by Lewis and Toldson (2013) illuminates the fact that Black men are less likely to graduate than their white counterparts from college, and of those who graduate, very few study education formally and an even smaller number of those who do specialize in education actually enter the profession as teachers.

### ***Recruitment***

The majority of research regarding recruitment of Black male educators focuses on the experience of college students. However, given the unique experience that Black male students face in education, more emphasis should be placed on what education programs and institutions could do in order to cultivate interest in the profession much earlier. A qualitative study conducted by Goings and Bianco (2016) explored the perspective of Black male high school students to determine the elements that propelled or deterred their interest in becoming teachers. Over the course of a year, 22 Black male students were enrolled in a high school course that exposed them to the teaching profession. Based on qualitative data, the study landed on two specific conclusions. High school students who had experienced stereotypes, microaggressions, and low expectations negatively impacted their desire to enter the field of education. This study confirms conclusions that have been drawn through previous research on the dearth of Black male educators. The negative experiences that are associated with teachers that young Black

male students experience dramatically impact their perception of the role as a future career. Unfortunately, many of these experiences occur with teachers who are not teachers of color (Goings and Bianco, 2016). Specifically, when analyzing this unique study through a Critical Race Theory lens, we see how the tenet of centrality of race and racism in society sheds light on the experience of Black male students in high school and thus deters them from entering a field where they feel marginalized from an early age.

Over the last decade, there has been significant movement in the development of initiatives geared towards recruiting Black men into the teaching profession post college. However, research shows that these efforts have been largely one-sided. Brockenbrough (2015), states that the current recruitment efforts “envision Black male teachers as surrogate father figures and role models” (p. 500). This finding is also represented in research conducted by Toldson (2011) who further expands on the expectation that Black male teachers bear the role of surrogate fathers, stating that it is irresponsible of recruitment efforts and organizations to allow for these practices to inherently delegate this role to Black men because of their race. Ultimately, recruitment efforts need to craft a narrative that is not particularly ascribed to the Black male teacher as the “surrogate father” but as someone who is there to enhance the academic achievement of Black students, prove the possible in a society where there are so few examples of Black male teachers, and validate their existence through a culturally applicable narrative.

### ***Retaining Black Male Educators***

With regard to Black male teacher retention, in addition to the current discouraging data that the teacher workforce comprises of only 2% of Black men, it is evident that organizations, education institutions, and policymakers must do more to retain Black men. Among all teachers, the turnover rate for teachers of color is higher than any other ethnic and racial group (Ingersoll

and May, 2016). There is very little research that exists on the multitude of reasons why Black male teachers stay teaching in schools. However, there are studies that show teachers of color are more likely to serve in and stay in school districts that educate predominately students of color Scafidia et al. (2007). In a study conducted across schools that were considered high-poverty, Scafidia et al. (2007) made the connection that as enrollment of Black students increased, the attrition of Black teachers was much lower than that of their white counterparts. This illustrates that Black teachers feel more connected and have an increased desire to stay at schools where they know Black students will need to see them as role models and beacons of what's possible professionally.

A theme emerging from other research as it relates to retention is the nature and number of relationships that are formed within education institutions between team members. Some may refer to the creation of these relationships as the foundation of staff morale among colleagues. These can either promote a positive work environment or detract from it. According to Simon and Johnson (2015), teacher satisfaction levels must be high in order for them to stay in the profession and although many factors contribute to retention, one of the most prominent predictors is the formation of community and interconnected positive relationships at the school. The cultivation of a strong, caring, and inclusive staff morale is quite difficult to achieve. However, if the goal is to retain Black male educators, it is imperative that school leaders work hard to foster an environment where unity, empathy, cultural competence, and respect are foundational elements. As previously stated, in order to retain Black male educators, the unintended, or intentional, assignment as the surrogate father title must cease to exist. Pabon (2016) suggests that school leaders must diligently work to deeply understand the impact of



### ***Career Progression***

While the literature surrounding recruitment and retention efforts for Black male teachers is growing, there is very little research investigating career progression of Black male teachers. The National Center for Education Statistics (2014) reports that approximately 30% of teachers that exit the classroom enter into positions of education leadership. However, Black male educators are often times overlooked for administration positions (Fenwick and Akua, 2014). Typically, a leadership position in the field of education can range from being a grade level leader, an assistant principal, curriculum leader, dean of students, or principal to name a few. When analyzing the statistics around education leaders who identify as White, the lack of Black male education leadership is apparent. The K-12 education workforce is comprised of 82% of educators who identify as non-Hispanic White and 78% of principals identify as non-Hispanic White (United States Department of Education, 2016). Despite the lack of Black male educators who occupy these positions in administration, few very initiatives at scale have been successful in producing more diversity in education leadership for Black men (Underwood, Smith, Lutz-Johnson, Taylor, and Roberts, 2019). One can draw a connection that if Black male educators positively contribute to the success of Black students, so should the visibility of Black male leaders in the education sector.

As a result of the underlying and unrealistic expectations that Black male teachers face to act as “saviors” for Black students, they are often pigeonholed into cultural positions within schools. Instead of Black men progressing into a more formal leadership role with titles that indicate positions of authority, like principal or curriculum leader, Black male teachers generally are relegated into roles like coach, disciplinarian roles like a Dean of Students, or other non-academic positions within schools (Fenwick and Akua, 2013). Data validates the statistic that of

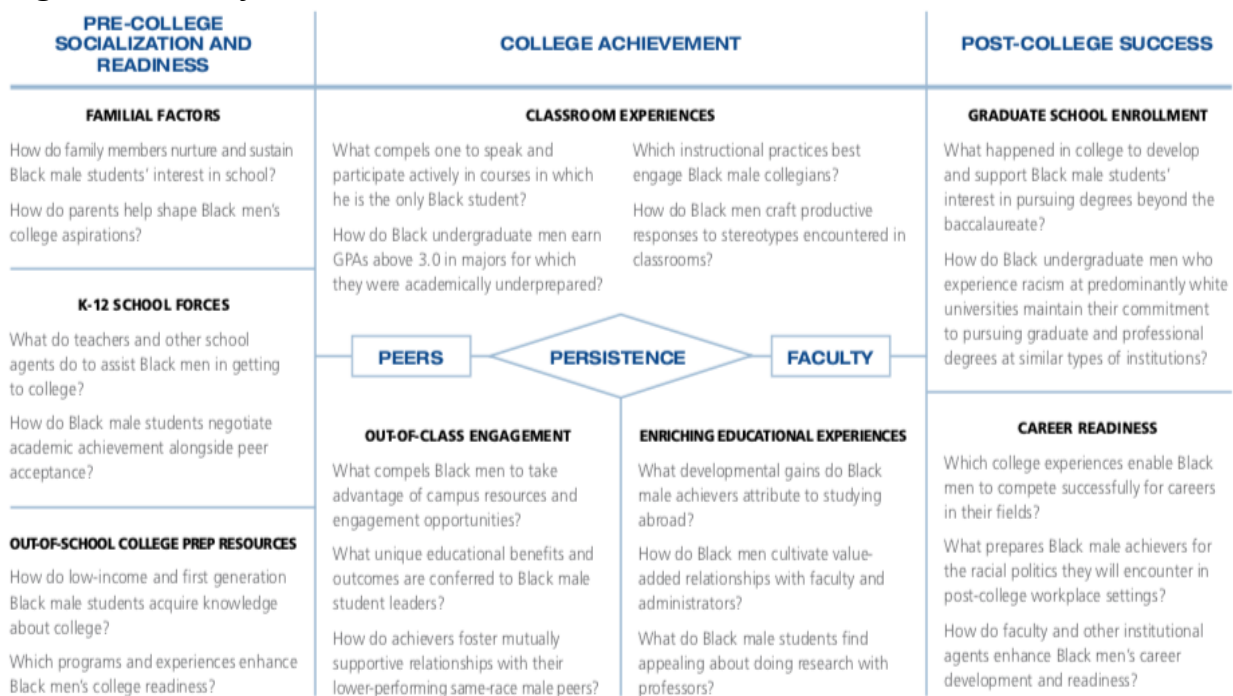
the 15,000 superintendents in America, less than 3% of them identify as Black across both male and female gender identification roles (Fenwick and Akua, 2013). While there are a number of factors that inform the low percentages of Black men in positions of authority, one body of research suggests that as a result of homogenous hiring committees, Black men are overlooked for positions of formal authority in schools (Solomon, 2015). Obviously, in order to be promoted into a leadership position, one must go through the proper channels of applying, and interviewing. However, research shows that a more diverse hiring committee leads to more diverse candidates being hired. Black men are overlooked and bypassed because of the demographic makeup of those who are looking to hire for education leadership positions (Bristol, 2014).

### Conceptual Framework

In the last decade, more and more research has emerged that adds context to the experience of men of color in America. Since the election of President Barack Obama, which arguably made him one of the most powerful people in the world, the accomplishments that men of color could achieve were redefined. In the book, *Obama on Our Minds: The Impact of Obama on The Psyche of America* (Baker, 2016) the authors discuss how President Obama served as a model of positivity, hope, and redefined notions of Black Masculinity to help dismantle some of the negative stereotypes of Black men that currently flood the media. One could argue that it was this monumental election that sparked many academics to begin exploring how a Black man navigated a world of barriers to become the President of the United States and launch the conversation around an anti-deficit narrative for men of color. In many ways, his success may offer an alternative to the negative narrative, and offer a set of positive strategies to achievement—a living model of an anti-deficit approach.

For the purpose of this qualitative study an Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework will be applied through narrative inquiry in order to critically evaluate the experiences of Black male educators. Hill Harper conducted a study of hundreds of Black male undergraduate students from colleges and universities. The purpose of his study, *Black Male Student Success in Higher Education* (2012), was to provide insight on the contributing factors that impacted the positive trajectory of men of color. Harper (2012) emphasizes through the study that instead of focusing on the already existing unconstructive narrative that focuses on lack of achievement, high incarceration rates, and other negative influencers, a counterbalanced approach of illustrating how men of color successfully navigated to and through post-secondary education and into their careers will help policy makers and organizations re-focus their efforts to better support men of color on their pathway to success. Harper’s (2012) anti-deficit framework, depicted in Figure 2, explores how factors such as classroom experiences, family supports, college access, and career readiness impact men of color.

**Figure 2: Anti-Deficit Based Achievement Framework**





*Note.* Anti-Deficit Achievement Framework. Adapted from S. R. Harper (2012), Black male student success in higher education: A report from the national Black male college achievement study. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.

What makes this framework particularly strong is that it is designed to explore three particular time periods: pre-college socialization and preparation, college achievement, post-college success, and career success (Harper, 2012). In an effort to study the cultivation of interest and entry into the field of education, retention, and career progression of Black Male Educators, the anti-deficit based framework can be employed to further understand what contributes to the success of Black men as they begin and navigate their careers as educators. Much of the literature surrounding the area of inquiry illustrates a number of barriers that inform the data point that only 2% of Black men comprise the education workforce. Successful application of the anti-deficit based framework in an investigative study of Black male educators places emphasis on the multitude of lived experiences that contribute to success in the field of education; presenting the opportunity for career to cradle organizations that support Black men to design and replicate some of these experiences in order to increase the number of Black men who thrive in the field of education. Additionally, because the framework is designed to focus on asset-based thinking versus deficit-based thinking, the findings will aid in the creation of a more positive narrative to who Black men are and combat the long-standing negative narrative that currently permeates American society.

This capstone seeks to investigate the issues that contribute to the discouraging statistic that only 2% of the education workforce is made up of Black men, but more importantly explore the lived experiences of Black male educators in order to shed light on what organizations and our country can do to support them. Through this study, the overarching question is how can

Profound Gentlemen and other cradle-to-career organizations with a similar mission, using an anti-deficit based approach, cultivate the interest and entry of Black men into education, support Black male educators in a way that leads to them staying in the field, and advance them to positions of leadership within education. In an effort to answer this more broad question, this study is guided by the following three research questions:

**Research Question #1:** *What life events and factors cultivate the interest and entry of Profound Gentlemen into the field of education?*

**Research Question #2:** *What experiences and programming does Profound Gentlemen provide that contribute to the retention of Black male educators?*

**Research Question #3:** *What elements of Profound Gentlemen contribute to the career advancement of Black male educators?*

Both the existing body of literature and the Anti-Deficit Based Framework are being used to ground the questions that guide this study. In regard to pre-college socialization, the literature suggests that studying the K-12 experience of Black men and analyzing the shortage of Black male educators through a Critical Race Theory lens is paramount in the pursuit to shed light on the early influences of Black male educators. Additionally, if we are to understand how to more effectively retain Black male educators, it's imperative that school leaders explore teacher satisfaction, how relationships are cultivated in the workplace, and how schools and organizations support the psychosocial dynamics that arise from the sense of "onlyness" that Black male educators experience in schools. Lastly, the questions presented in the Anti-Deficit Based Framework under post-college success, can be directly applied to career readiness of Black male educators and shed light on career advancement.

## Project Design

This study was designed to investigate how cradle-to-career organizations like Profound Gentlemen can aid in three particular areas: cultivation of interest and entry into the education workforce, retention, and career advancement of Black male educators. The research technique used in this study can be defined as narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry, as a methodology, is a way of exploring the experiences, stories, and events through first-hand accounts in order to collect data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). This section further elaborates on the project design, the selection of participants, and presentation of the instruments used to conduct the investigation into the lives of Black male educators in order to perform data analysis and present recommendations. Using the Anti-Deficit Based Framework, questions were designed to further understand the unique experiences of Black male educators in order to present findings and propose recommendations.

### *Participants and Instruments*

The participants for this study identified as Black men and also members of the organization Profound Gentlemen. The members interviewed included founders, Impact Leaders and general members. A total of twenty-two interviews were conducted to gather data on the factors that contribute to the cultivation of interest, retention, and career advancement of Black male educators. In an effort to circumvent group think, interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis with individual members of Profound Gentlemen and each interview lasted for approximately forty-five minutes. Participation in the one-on-one interview were voluntary in that members of Profound Gentlemen had the opportunity to directly communicate with the researcher by responding to the email request as referenced in Appendix A. Additionally,

interview participants were sent a survey, referenced in Appendix B, to complete at the end of the interview to gather additional data on the strength of some of their reactions.

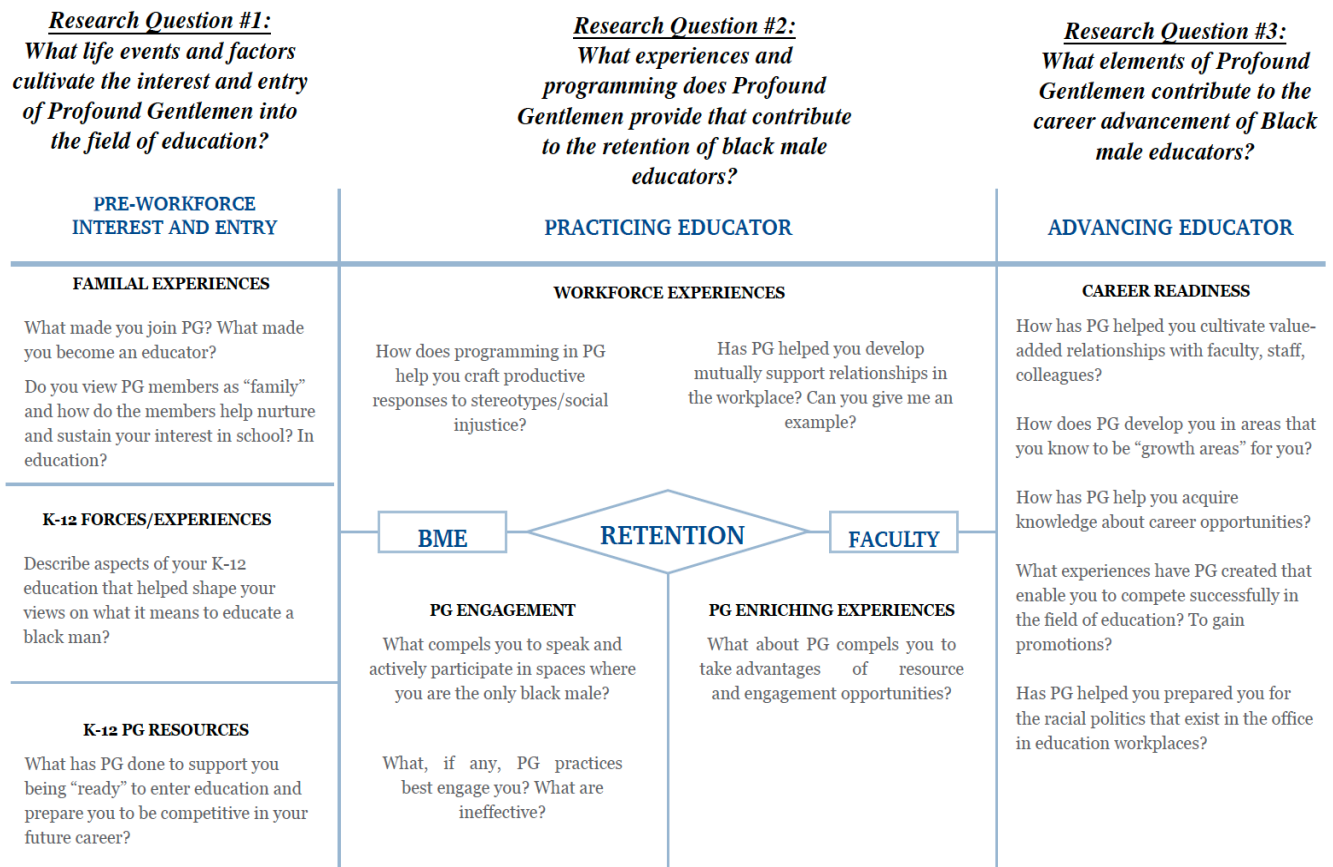
In an effort to garner the most useful data, interview questions and the survey tool were grounded in the Anti-Deficit Based Framework. The Anti-Deficit Based Framework looks at the three distinct areas of Black male achievement, aligned chronologically: pre-college socialization and readiness, college achievement, and post-college success. For the sake of this capstone, those distinct categories were redefined to represent and explore the experience of educators as illustrated in Table 1 as: 1) Pre-Workforce Interest and Entry, 2) Practicing Educator, and 3) Advancing Educator.

**Table 1: Redefining the Anti-Deficit Based Timeline**

<u>Anti-Deficit Based Timeline</u>	<u>Application of Anti-Deficit Based Timeline for Profound Gentlemen Study</u>	<u>Research Questions Application</u>
<p><b><i>Pre-College Socialization and Readiness</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Familiar Factors</li> <li>- K-12 Forces</li> <li>- Out of School College Prep Resources</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Pre-Workforce Interest and Entry</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Familiar Factors</li> <li>- K-12 Forces/Experiences</li> <li>- PG Resources</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Research Question 1:</i></b>  <i>What life events and factors cultivate the interest and entry of Profound Gentlemen into the field of education?</i></p>
<p><b><i>College Achievement</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom Experiences</li> <li>- Out-of-Classroom engagement</li> <li>- Enriching Educational Experiences</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Practicing Educator</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workforce Experiences</li> <li>- PG Engagement</li> <li>- PG Enriching Experiences</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Research Question #2:</i></b>  <i>What experiences and programming does Profound Gentlemen provide that contribute to the retention of Black male educators?</i></p>
<p><b><i>Post College</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graduate School Enrollment</li> <li>- Career Readiness</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Advancing Educator</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Career Readiness and Progression</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Research Question #3:</i></b>  <i>What elements of Profound Gentlemen contribute to the career advancement of Black male educators?</i></p>

The initial drafting of questions, appearing in Appendix B, was designed to collect data on the overarching research questions of this study. Then, in an effort to more intentionally align the interview questions to the conceptual framework being applied to this study, a question refinement process took place using the Anti-Deficit Based framework as a springboard. The Anti-Deficit Based Framework already provided strong questioning to explore the experience of Black male achievers; thus, for the purpose of this study, questions were designed based on the existing questions within the framework and restructured to fit the context of the organization, Profound Gentlemen, and the experience of Black male educators as illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Capstone Interview Questions embedded within/Anti-Deficit Based Framework**



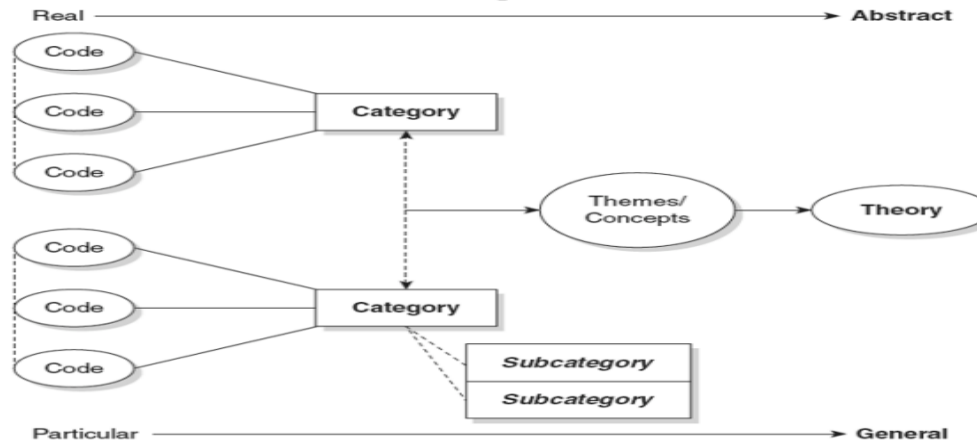
### ***Data Analysis***

Data collection began in the Fall of 2020 with a total of twenty-two Black Male educators who were active in Profound Gentlemen. Of these participants, the two co-founders were interviewed, 6 Impact Leaders, and 14 general members of which 70% were participants who were active in education more than 3 years. Additionally, all 22 survey participants engaged in the qualitative survey at the end of their interview as well.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

After collecting and transcribing verbatim each of the twenty-two interviews, a number of platforms were utilized in order to explore how frequent words and phrases were being used, which opened the door for a deep analysis of how each individual interviewee’s narratives were interrelated or distinctive. Ironically, after the first four to six interviews, it was clear that there were some recurring words, concepts, experiences, and themes that emerged, indicating that I had reached saturation of main ideas. This led to the manual coding of general themes aligned to the theoretical and conceptual framework being used for the study. After reviewing each interview and reading each transcript three to four times over, codes and themes were generated using the streamline-code-to-theory model (Saldana, 2015) as illustrated in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Streamline Code to Theory Model**



In open coding (Saldana, 2015) codes are generated by reviewing and analyzing the data to discover core themes, as well as greater connection to the reoccurring themes. The method also commits to being true to the voice and narrative of the participants. The final analysis of data will include reoccurring codes that lead to trends or consistent themes across the experiences of Black male educators.

## Findings

The purpose of this section is to present the findings for the three research questions that this study seeks to further understand. As mentioned previously, during the process in which analysis was conducted of the twenty two participant interviews, the method of open coding using the Streamline Coding (Saldana, 2015) process was applied in order to generate the following findings. Using the Anti-Deficit Based Framework, this section explores the lived experiences of Black male educators in *Profound Gentlemen*. Themes emerged in their narratives that describe what led to the cultivation of interest and entry into the field of education, their retention, and factors that contribute to their career advancement.

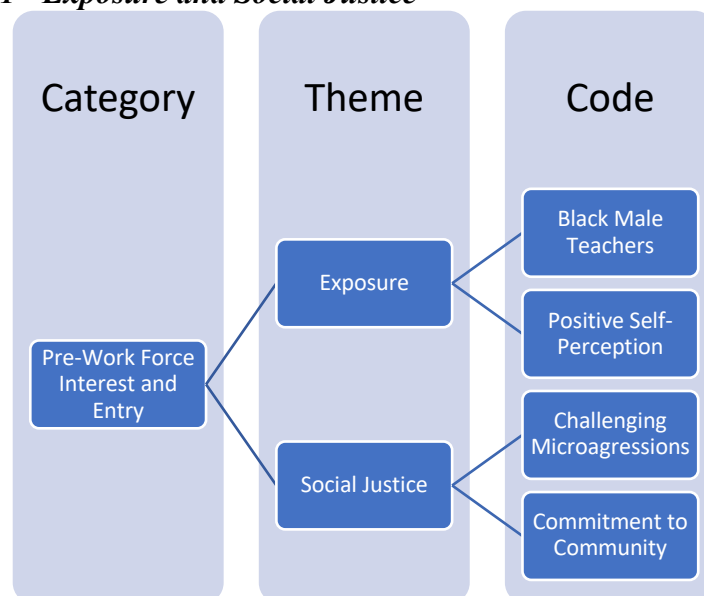
### ***Cultivation of Interest and Entry (Recruitment)***

The first research question that this study investigates is:

*What life events and factors cultivate the interest and entry of Profound Gentlemen into the field of education?*

The first finding, also illustrated in Figure 5, suggests that exposure to Black male educators and a passion for social justice are two key factors in cultivating the interest and entry into the education workforce for Profound Gentlemen members.

**Figure 5: Finding #1 - Exposure and Social Justice**



Lewis and Toldson (2013) discuss the importance of Black men going to and graduating from college, an essential first step for a young Black man to enter the field of education. When Black male educators in Profound Gentlemen were asked if they viewed PG members as ‘family’ and how do they nurture and sustain your interest in schooling and education, the overwhelming majority of members mentioned the importance of how those they consider to be family nurtured and sustained their interest in schooling and entering the workforce. Harper’s (2012) study of Black men persisting through college suggests that even for students whose immediate family



members didn't graduate from college, surrounding themselves with people who nurture and sustain their interest in graduating from college and entering a field they love nurtured and sustained more Black men to stay on the pathway toward social mobility and success. Without this support the very first obstacle, graduating from college and entering education, would be impossible to achieve.

Among the findings, the K-12 experience of Profound Gentlemen had a lasting effect on whether or not they became interested in entering the field of education. The overwhelming majority, over 75% of the participants, alluded to the fact that having a Black male educator during their K-12 school experience was a key determinant on whether or not they wanted to go to college and more specifically become an educator. About 30% of the participants stated the phrase verbatim, "You can't be, what you can't see," as they talked about the importance of having a Black male educator in their school. This is consistent with Villegas and Irvine (2010) who suggest that when students of color see Black people in non-academic versus academic roles, they begin to socially construct indubitable assumptions regarding their own future possibilities and professions. Black male educators in Profound Gentlemen continually alluded to the presence of Black male teachers in their K-12 experience as helping them develop a positive self-perception as to who they are and can become.

A number of participants in this study expressed their passion for social justice, stating that becoming a Black male educator was their way to show a commitment to their community and to give back, but to also challenge the explicit and implicit racism they experienced during their K-12 schooling. Participants shared multiple examples of how being a Black male student often came with racial microaggressions from their White teachers. One participant stated,

**“Our students are experiencing trauma; I know I did.... especially from school systems where consequence ladders are specifically designed with the black male student in mind.”**

Yu (2016) research shows how Black men who experienced stereotypes combined with covert and overt microaggressions impacted their desire to become educators. Profound Gentlemen feel a moral and ethical obligation to their communities and feel that being present for students of color supports the dismantling of the deficit-based narrative and ensures that Black students don’t implicitly assume during their K-12 experience that only white people can be teachers or serve as education leaders.

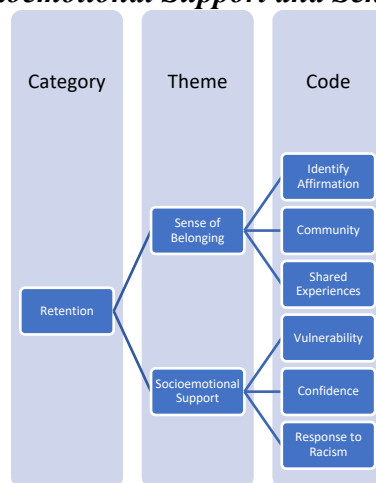
***Retention***

The second research question that this study investigates is:

*What experiences and programming does Profound Gentlemen provide that contribute to the retention of Black male educators?*

The second finding, illustrated in Figure 6, suggests that the socioemotional support and sense of belonging that Profound Gentlemen creates aids in the retention of Black male educators.

**Figure 6: Finding #2 – Socioemotional Support and Sense of Belonging**



The term, “onlyness” as coined by Harper et. al. (2011) accurately depicts the experience that the 2% of Black male educators face in the workplace. Onlyness is defined as “the psychoemotional burden of having to strategically navigate a racially politicized space occupied by few peers, role models, and guardians from one’s same racial or ethnic group” (Harper et al., 2011, p. 190). The lack of representation in the education workforce and sense of onlyness experienced by Black male teachers threatens their sense of belonging. This study reveals that participating in organizations like Profound Gentlemen supports the retention of Black male educators because of the unique experiences it provides by building a community of Black male educators. Phrases like community and identity affirmation were recurring answers from participants when asked, “what compels you to speak and actively participant in spaces where you are the only Black male?” One cohort member reflected on the 2019 Community Impact Assembly, the yearly conference that Profound Gentlemen hosts, saying,

***“The theme and title of the conference was ‘We Belong,’ which automatically puts you in a space psychologically. Imagine there are 200 other Black male educators coming from across the country, me being one of them, and I am the only Black male teacher at my school in the Southern region of America. A place where the history of racism is still alive and well. You can’t imagine how it feels to know that for the next three days you are about to have your identity affirmed in a way that makes you not feel alone and gives you the strength to go back and have your voice heard and identity recognized”.***

Profound Gentlemen participants consistently referred to the idea of getting together with other Black men to revitalize their spirit and be grounded in the idea that although geographically they may be the only Black male on their school campus, they are not in the work alone with thousands of Black men across the country building a community of support.

The literature suggests that being able to productively respond to racism is a key factor in persistence and retention (Harper, 2012). “Stereotype Threat,” a term coined by Claude Steele, is described as the internal and psychological pressure that people experience when they have to

navigate either confirming or dispelling the negative stereotypes associated with their ethnic or racial groups (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Especially in an environment where there is such little support, it is easy to suppress your true feelings and thoughts out of fear of exile and ridicule. Allen (2015) found racism in schools to be so inescapable that some Black teachers choose to “behave as white teachers,” in an effort to keep their jobs and to assimilate into the workforce culture. As a result, Black male teachers begin to espouse and perpetuate the dominant ideological positioning and fail to challenge the stereotypes and racial injustices that push them out of the teaching profession. When asked how programming in PG helps craft productive responses to stereotypes and social injustices, participants overwhelmingly referred to how the socioemotional support that Profound Gentlemen provides through creating spaces of vulnerability, shared experiences, and confidence aids in their response to racism. One participant stated,

***“When I’m in the PG space, whether that is with my cohort members at brunch, in a one-on-one meeting with my Impact Leader, or a workshop on race at a PG conference, the first thing I experience is the opportunity to be vulnerable and share the experiences of dumb, ignorant, and racist comments and situations I’ve witnessed as a Black male educator. It is also in those spaces where I am able to have the confidence to speak up and challenge those negative stereotypes with even stronger responses after being in a space with others and seeing different perspectives and angles to address it in the future”.***

Validated in the research conducted by Harper (2012), the importance of having this ability to respond productively is a strategy that is learned through being in same-race, sometimes same-gendered and same-race, spaces. Being able to share experiences in spaces where vulnerability is appreciated and expected, confidence is built through the collaboration and brainstorming of ways to effectively respond to racial injustices. This also contributes to the affirmation of identity, sense of belonging, and provides the much needed socioemotional support Black male

educators yearn for. These supports are what ultimately keep them returning to the field year after year.

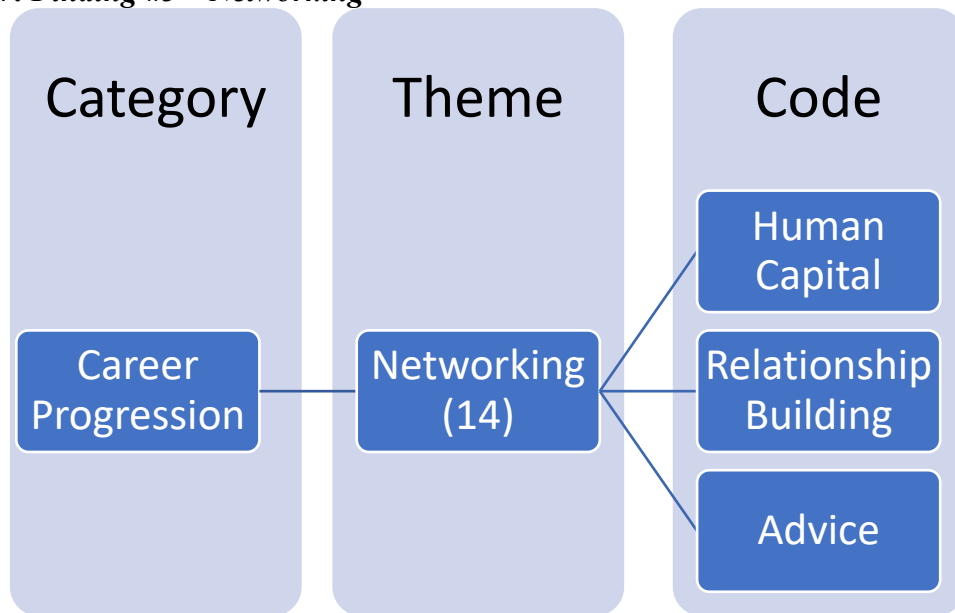
**Career Progression**

The final research question that this study investigates is:

*What elements of Profound Gentlemen contribute to the career advancement of Black male educators?*

The final finding as a result of this capstone study, illustrated in Figure 7, shows that the ability to foster relationships, extend human capital, and seek advice through networking contribute to the career advancement of Black male educators.

**Figure 7: Finding #3 – Networking**



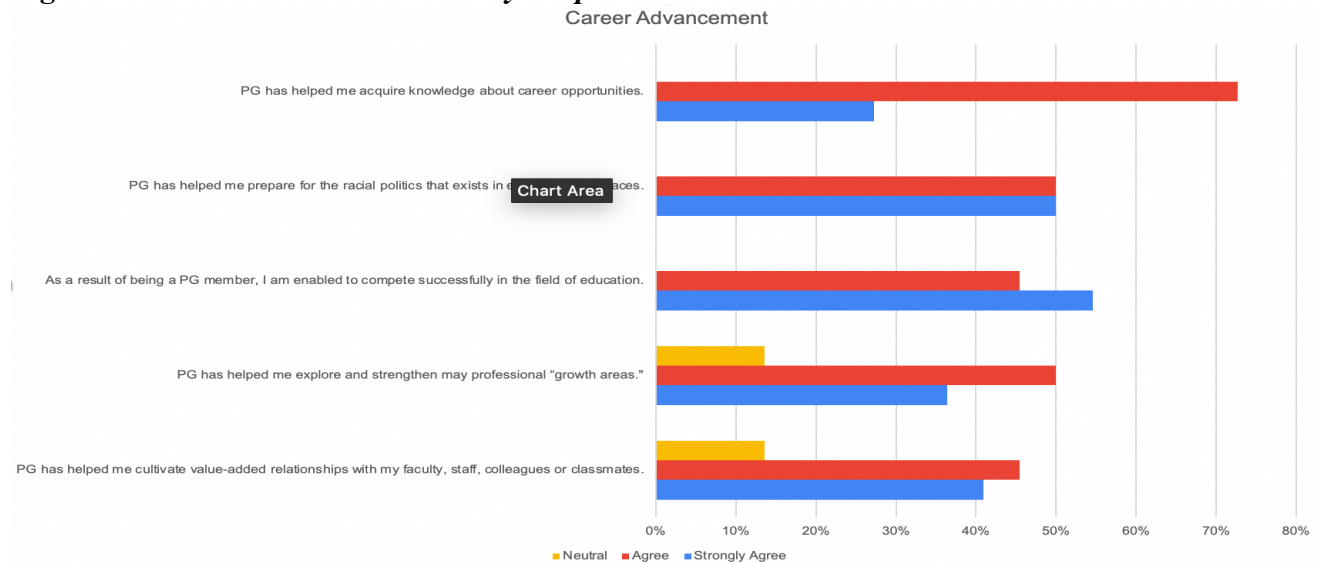
There is much less literature that exists around what contributes to career advancement of Black male educators. Thus, this study serves as a solid contribution to this area of research as it explores the lived experiences of Black male educators who have progressed into leadership. Overwhelmingly, participants in this study noted that networking was a major element that allowed them to advance in their career. For most Black male educators, especially those that are

beginning their careers, it is difficult to know what advancement opportunities exist in the field and who to go to access that knowledge. When asked, “has PG helped you acquire knowledge about career opportunities,” one participant stated,

***“I literally wouldn’t have been an Assistant Principal if it wasn’t for meeting my now boss at the conference. At every conference, there is a networking room that says open from start to finish on each conference day that people can simply go into during their down time and connect with others, I met my mentor and now boss there”.***

This finding is validated by survey data collected throughout the study from all 22 participants as indicated in Figure 8. When asked on a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) if PG has helped me acquire knowledge about career opportunities, 72% of participants agree and 28% strongly agree that through the networking that PG provides they are able to learn and explore career and advancement opportunities.

**Figure 8: Career Advancement Survey Responses**



Research conducted by Fenwick and Akua (2013) sheds light on the plight that Black male educators face by being pigeonholed into disciplinarian and non-academic roles. Participants validated this research finding throughout interview conversations and continually mentioned how networking within PG, both formally and informally, allowed them to develop relationships

with others who had successfully navigated the journey from teacher to education leader. Having the opportunity to seek advice when needed, get interview support from other PG members through strong relationships, and simply having the ability to speak to someone who may connect you with someone else, were all career advancement elements that PG members experienced.

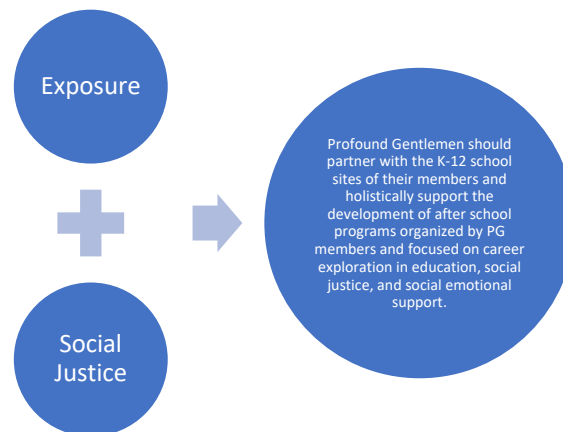
## Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how Profound Gentlemen and similar cradle- to-career organizations can cultivate the interest and entry into the field of education, retain Black male educators, and support the career advancement of Black male educators. Based on the findings generated by this research of Black male educators in Profound Gentlemen, the following interventions are recommended.

### ***Recommendation 1: The Profound Gentlemen Afterschool Program***

As illustrated in Figure 9, Profound Gentlemen should partner with the K-12 school sites of their members and holistically support the development of after school programs organized by PG members and focused on career exploration in education and social justice.

**Figure 9: Recommendation 1 - Profound Gentlemen Afterschool Program**







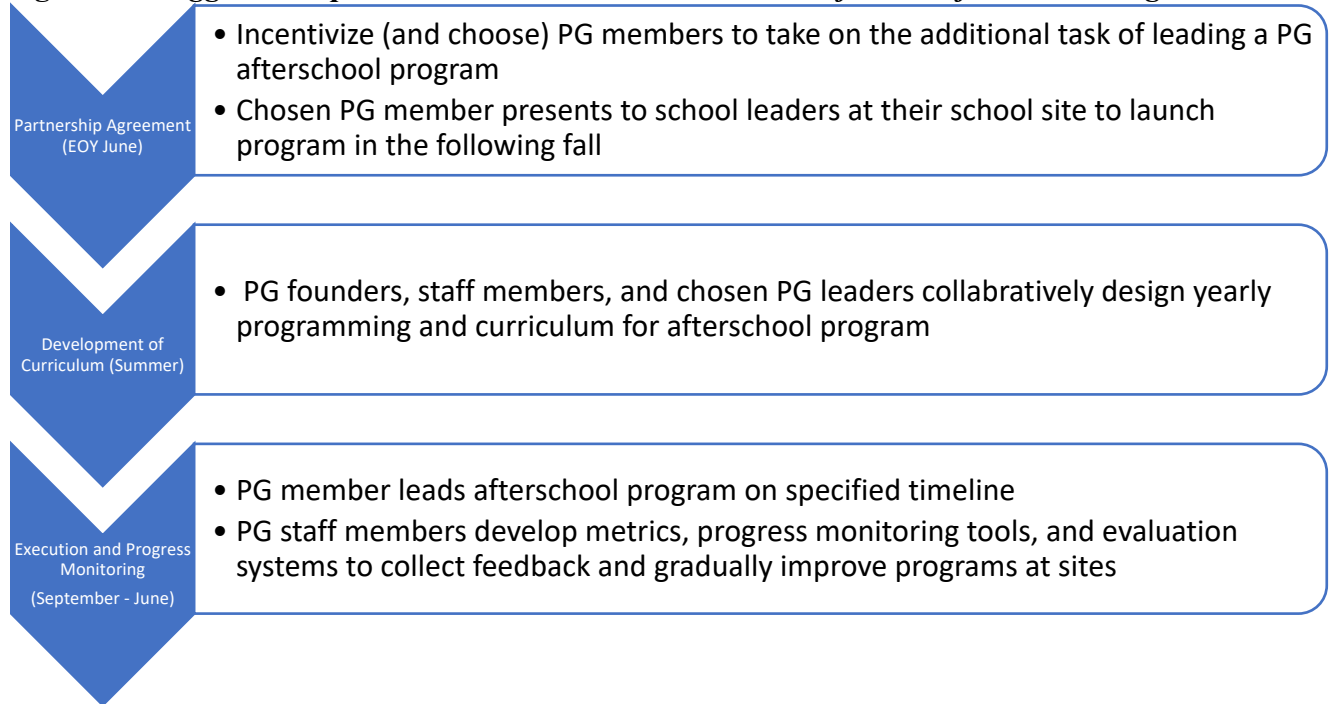
3. PG afterschool program will expose students to social justice programming that focuses on navigating the K-12 experience as a Black man and providing socioemotional support and networking opportunities for Black students across school sites.

A curriculum or after school program scope and sequence designed by Black men will allow students in the program to explore identity, discuss issues at their particular school, learn how to navigate challenging experiences, and be equipped with skills and tools to thrive in environments where they suffer from “onlyness.” These experiences, much like the experiences that PG members engage in frequently, will positively impact the students in the program and further inspire them to enter college and become educators. All in all, this program can be viewed as Profound Gentlemen for students.

*Implementing Recommendation #1: Next Steps for Profound Gentlemen*

In order to successfully implement this recommendation, the first agenda item would be for the co-founders and staff to put together a brainstorming and afterschool program committee with the goal of collectively producing the uniform contract/proposal that includes: mission, values, objectives, goals, funding information, contact info, and other operational information. These planning documents would be provided to PG members so that they could present the plans to their school leaders for approval to launch a program at their school site. Additionally, the organization would need to think through how much of a financial investment this would be to cover an additional Profound Gentlemen a yearly stipend for their work after hours, and what it would take to establish and fund monthly programming for students. These would likely be the two major financial commitments to launch a program of this magnitude. After those two items are complete, the following process outlined in Figure 10 is suggested:

**Figure 10: Suggested Implementation and Execution Timeline for PG Afterschool Program**



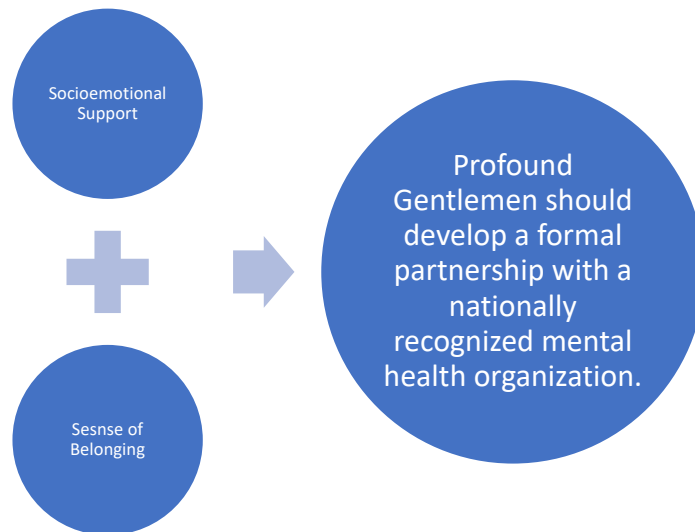
While there might be some limitations to this idea in that some schools could potentially oppose an external organization from coming in, the data suggest that our schools are failing Black men and this intervention would only be a beneficial addition to any school environment. The programming would provide another potential space for Black male students to learn, thrive, positively contribute back to the school community, and further enhance their aspirations in college and a career thereafter.

***Recommendation 2: Developing Mental Health Partnerships***

Data on the experiences and programming that contribute to the retention of Black male educators show that socioemotional support and the sense of belonging created by PG are the two major factors that keep Black male educators returning. While the organization is doing well, according to evidence collected throughout the capstone study, there is room for improvement by creating even more intentionally structured spaces and systems of support.

As illustrated in Figure 11, Profound Gentlemen should develop a formal partnership with a nationally recognized mental health organization.

**Figure 11: Recommendation 2 - Mental Health Partnership**



While Impact Leaders are meeting with individual Profound Gentlemen throughout the school year to provide one-on-one support, this structure is subject to the efficacy of each Impact Leader. With this level of autonomy, it is difficult to measure which specific components of this structure is positively contributing to the socioemotional stability of PG members. The support of an Impact Leader, while extremely important, is coming from another Black male educator who is using their lived experiences to guide and advise, and not necessarily a licensed professional that is able to further help navigate the effects of stereotype threat, racism, and the sense of oneliness that comes along with being a Black male educator. Throughout data collection, participants frequently referred to the effects of stereotype threat and the psychological pressures that they have to navigate dispelling negative stereotypes faced by Black men and the racism they experience in their careers. The impact of these phenomena must be addressed by licensed professionals, which leads to the suggestion that Profound Gentlemen should partner with a

nationally recognized mental health organization to provide additional and professional support to its members.

An official partnership with a mental health organization would achieve the following objectives for PG members:

1. Provide mental health education to PG members and provide them with additional resources to ensure they are leading a healthy life.
2. Allow PG members to engage in workshops hosted by mental health professionals.
3. Grant access to one-on-one support/counseling from a mental health professional.

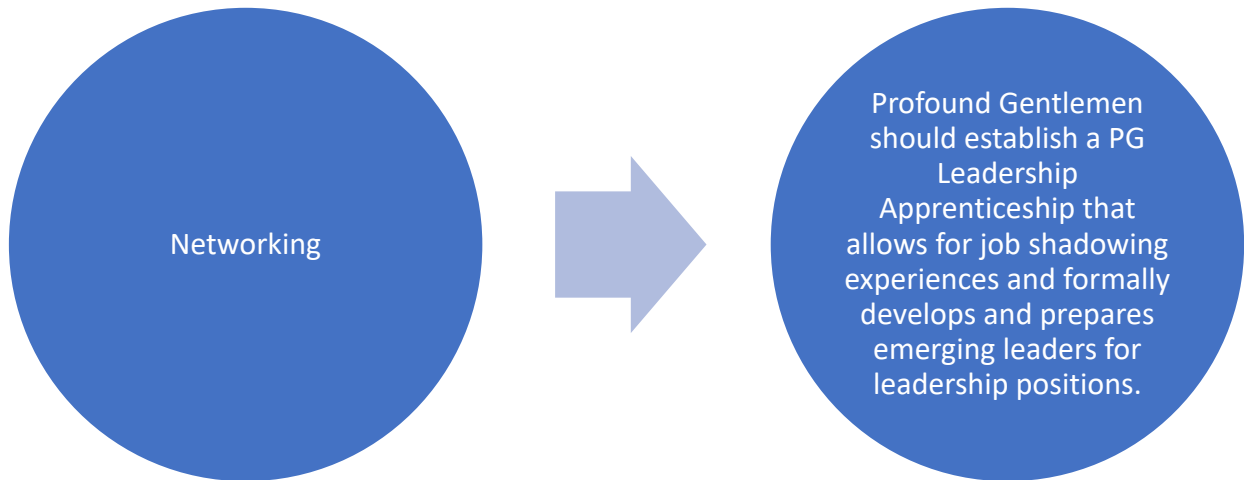
While most Profound Gentlemen have access to health insurance through their employers, the likelihood of them taking advantage of mental health services is low. With the effects of stereotype threat and the stigma already associated with getting support from mental health professionals that exist within the Black community, Black men are likely to avoid the support of a professional. By developing a formal partnership with a mental health organization that can provide ongoing support, lead workshops, and educate PG members more formally, Profound Gentlemen educators will feel more inclined to engage with mental health professionals as the organization normalizes psychological safety and health for Black men.

***Recommendation 3: Leadership Apprenticeship***

The career advancement of Black male educators was the area of study that had the least amount of literature and throughout the interviews one finding was evident; networking was an overarching theme that contributed to career progression. Specifically, through networking Black male educators were able to foster and build new relationships, seek advice, and extend their human capital networks.

As illustrated in Figure 12, Profound Gentlemen should establish a PG Leadership Apprenticeship that allows for job shadowing experiences, develops emerging leaders, and prepares them for leadership.

**Figure 12: Recommendation 3 - PG Leadership Apprenticeship**



While there is certainly a benefit from reading about leadership, engaging in case studies, and formally going to school to study leadership, leadership in practice is much more difficult than leadership in theory. More recently, education institutions have started to develop “In Residence” programs for those that are interested in becoming leaders within their school districts. In these programs aspiring leaders train and develop in a comprehensive program that ultimately deems them ready through an evaluation system. However, given the extremely low representation of Black men currently within the education workforce, combined with the body of literature that suggests that Black men are overlooked for positions of formal authority in schools (Solomon, 2015), Profound Gentlemen would benefit from establishing its own Leadership Apprenticeship that specifically supports this marginalized.

The objectives of the PG Leadership Apprenticeship would be to:

1. Provide mentorship and job shadowing opportunities to emerging PG leaders (educators in years 3-6) with a “Profound Educators” (Year 7+ and holds a formal leadership title) .
2. Prepare emerging PG leaders (educators in years 3-6) through a monthly leadership development series .

While Profound Gentlemen are already receiving one-on-one support from an Impact Leader who may or may not hold a formal leadership title, the establishment of a specifically-designed leadership development program would be greatly beneficial for PG. For starters, the program can be created through a Black male leader’s perspective and designed for Black men specifically. It’s evident that the experience of Black male educators is unique and significantly more challenging than other ethnic and gender groups, and thus PG would be able to provide targeted leadership support to a niche that is often forgotten about in leadership residency programs.

The first step that the cofounders and PG staff members would need to do is specifically designate one individual as the Director of Leadership Development within the organization. This role does not have to be a full time position but can be compensated with a one-time stipend or on a monthly basis. Their role and responsibility would be to recruit and appoint one PG leader (an assistant principal, principal, department chair, superintendent, etc.), within each region that will serve as that region’s Mentor Leader. After garnering interest within each cohort of which emerging leaders are seeking to be developed further, Mentor Leaders can schedule job shadowing experiences, use their connections to provide access to leadership opportunities within the region, and will be responsible for leading emerging leaders through a yearly scope

and sequence that address various aspects of what it means to be a Black male leader in the education space including interview preparation. The establishment of formal leadership education and on-the-job shadowing would certainly support the preparation and advancement of Black male educators who are just beginning their careers.

## Discussion and Conclusion

So often, Black men are viewed through a deficit-based lens as a result of historic racism and systematic oppression. As a result, the achievement of Black boys in schools remains discouraging: low graduation rates, high dropout rates, and poor academic achievement are just a few of the consequences. This cycle, in turn, contributes to the low number of Black men who matriculate, graduate, and enter America's workforce. However, this study illustrates that despite the stereotypes and negative narrative that exist in this country, Black men can and are succeeding.

The purpose of this study was to further explore the lived experiences of Black male educators as they work to change the narrative for Black boys in school and for Black male educators. By applying an asset-based framework through questions specifically designed to highlight the factors and elements that contribute to Black male educators being successful, this capstone aims to break glass ceilings. First, it debunks the myth that Black men can't succeed by studying successful Black men within an organization that is thriving in just five years since being established. This study is simple; find Black male educators, ask them how they got to where they are in life, explore what keeps them motivated and excited to stay in the field, and try to replicate these successes across organizations. While this study was focused on Black male educators and trying to overturn the statistic of only 2% of Black men entering the education

workforce, this study also sheds light on what organizations can do to cultivate the interest of young Black boys, not only to enter the field of education, but to aspire to enter college, graduate, and live a life as a productive citizen by ensuring Black men are present in their K-12 experience.

While this study does come with some limitations, the benefit of its findings can drastically impact the lives of Black men if utilized. One limitation of this study was the use of narrative inquiry. As a result of personally interviewing twenty-two Profound Gentlemen members, it is inevitable that researcher and participant develop a deep and personal connection. As a result, it is possible for researcher's bias to impact the outcome of the study. However, the findings from this research certainly will support Profound Gentlemen in becoming an even more impactful organization. More importantly, the findings can be applied to a multitude of organizations to further support the achievement of Black men. By understanding that exposure to Black male teachers during a student's K-12 experience positively impacts the trajectory of a Black male student's life, policymakers and education institutions can begin to think more critically about how to get more Black male educators into schools. Knowing that adequate socioemotional support and cultivating a sense of belonging are two factors that keep Black male educators in the field can help school leaders generate intentional support within their schools to keep Black men in front of students. Lastly, knowing that networking enhances the career advancement of Black male educators, organizations can be more strategic with networking events, building communication skills to network more effectively, and maximizing existing networks.

There is certainly more research to be conducted applying an asset-based framework to better understand the lived experiences of Black men. One of the intentions of this study was to





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## Appendices

### *Appendix A:*

Dear Profound Gentlemen Member,

My name is Sean Larry Stevens, a 12<sup>th</sup> year educator and currently pursuing my Ed.D at Vanderbilt University. For my capstone, I have been studying Profound Gentlemen's approach to supporting the recruitment, retention, and career advancement of Black male educators and am looking to collect data by hearing your stories as men of color who are currently in our classrooms changing lives. Below is some quick information on my capstone:

The purpose of this quality improvement project is to investigate how an anti-deficit framework can be applied to Profound Gentlemen in order to increase the retention of Black male educators, support their career development and progression, and encourage high school students to enter into college and education careers. The study aims to examine the factors that influenced academic achievement, college graduation, and career readiness and progression among Black male educators. The results of the study will provide Profound Gentlemen with an analysis of the data that yields suggestions on how to incorporate findings into every aspect of their organization in order to improve.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time. Participation in this survey and interview is complete is voluntary and confidential.

Next Steps:

- If you are interested in being interviewed by Sean Stevens, please reply to this email or send a direct email to [seanlarryrashad@gmail.com](mailto:seanlarryrashad@gmail.com) in order to schedule a unique time for a 30-60 minute interview.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Sean Larry Stevens

**Appendix B: Interview Questions**

*One-on-One Interview Survey Questions*

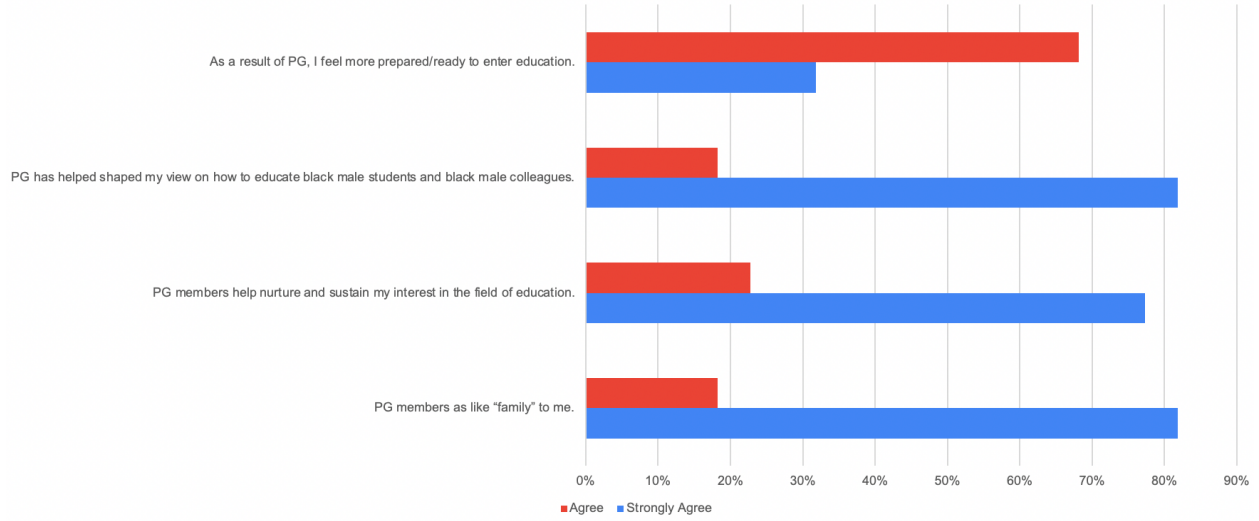
Stakeholder	Pre-College Socialization and Readiness (Before being in workforce)	Achievement (Practicing Educator)	Post Success Advancing Educator
PG Founders PG Impact Leaders PG Members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What made you join PG? What made you become an educator?</li> <li>2. What do you think K-12 schools should be doing to assist Black men in getting to college, through college, and into an education field?</li> <li>3. Are you first-generation? How is PG supporting enhancing knowledge and resources for first gen-college grads and recent grads who go into education?</li> <li>4. Describe aspects of your K-12 education that helped shape your views on what it means to educate a black man?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does programming in PG help you craft productive responses to stereotypes/social injustice?</li> <li>2. What about PG compels you to take advantages of resource and engagement opportunities?</li> <li>3. Has PG helped you develop mutually support relationships? Can you give me an example?</li> <li>4. What, if any, PG practices best engage you? What are ineffective?</li> <li>5. What compels you to speak and actively participate in spaces where you are the only black male?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How has PG helped you cultivate value-added relationships with faculty, staff, colleagues?</li> <li>2. How does PG develop you in areas that you know to be "growth areas" for you?</li> <li>3. <b>How has PG help you acquire knowledge about career opportunities?</b></li> <li>4. <b>What experiences have PG created that enable you to compete successfully in the field of education? To gain promotions?</b></li> <li>5. <b>Has PG helped you prepared you for the racial politics that exist in the office in education workplaces?</b></li> </ol>

*Likert Scale Survey Questions*

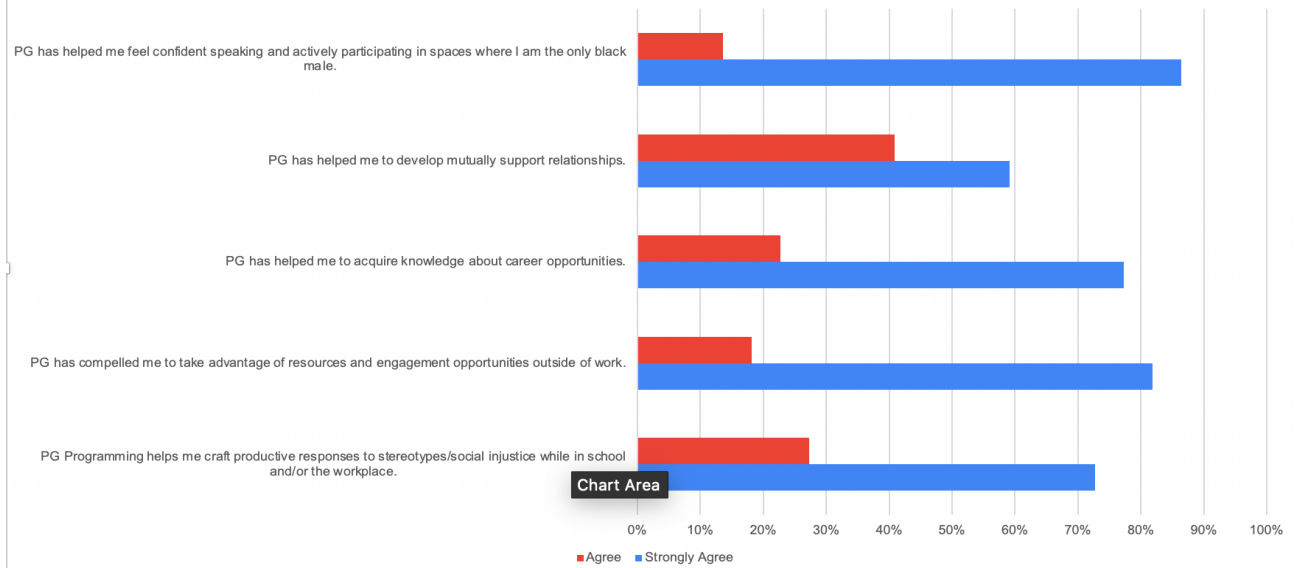
Stakeholder	Pre-College Socialization and Readiness	Achievement	Post Success
PG Members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PG members as like "family" to me.</li> <li>2. PG members help nurture and sustain my interest in the field of education.</li> <li>3. PG has helped shaped my view on how to educate black male students and black male colleagues.</li> <li>4. As a result of PG, I feel more prepared/ready to enter education.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PG Programming helps me craft productive responses to stereotypes/ social injustice while in school and/or the workplace.</li> <li>2. PG has compelled me to take advantage of resources and engagement opportunities outside of work.</li> <li>3. PG has helped me to acquire knowledge about career opportunities.</li> <li>4. PG has helped me to develop mutually support relationships.</li> <li>5. PG has helped me feel confident speaking and actively participating in spaces where I am the only black male.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PG has helped me cultivate value-added relationships with my faculty, staff, colleagues or classmates.</li> <li>2. PG has helped me explore and strengthen my professional "growth areas."</li> <li>3. As a result of being a PG member, I am enabled to compete successfully in the field of education.</li> <li>4. PG has helped me prepare for the racial politics that exists in education workplaces.</li> <li>5. PG has helped me acquire knowledge about career opportunities.</li> </ol>

*Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire Responses*

Cultivating Interest and Entry (Reruitment)



Retention



Career Advancement

