GOODWIN, INDIA R. S. Ph.D. Considering Black Male Consciousness within the Context of Genre: A Framework for Engaging and Analyzing Bodies of Literature that Center Black Male Bodies and their Racialized Experiences. (2023)
Directed by Dr. Glenn Hudak. 145 pp.

Considering Black Male Consciousness within the Context of Genre: A Framework for Engaging and Analyzing Bodies of Literature that Center Black Male Bodies and their Racialized Experiences represents primarily the union of genre studies and Tommy J. Curry's (2017) *Man-Not*—a theory that accounts for the historical/societal gendering of Black males, a practice that does not account for the various masculinities, or genres represented by Black manhood. The coupling of these concepts ultimately leads to the culmination of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and a related set of signposts for analysis to be used in the secondary English classroom. The historical underpinnings of Curry's (2017) work with genre in relation to Black men and boys along with the conceptual frameworks presented by genre systems are rarely, if ever, met with a level of pedagogical nuance necessary for disrupting deficit models of being that are continuously used to construct and perpetuate caricatures associated with Black male bodies in both literature and in life. As such, the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework aims to help readers (both teachers and students) make meaning from Black males' lived experiences—as presented by Black males—while creating a space in which readers are urged to interrogate social constructs and internalized beliefs around Black manhood.

CONSIDERING BLACK MALE CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GENRE: A FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING AND ANALYZING BODIES OF LITERATURE THAT CENTER BLACK MALE BODIES AND THEIR RACIALIZED EXPERIENCES

by

India R. S. Goodwin

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro

2023

Approved by

Dr. Glenn Hudak
Committee Chair

DEDICATION

"No other group of people could be so easily dismissed and condemned as 'privileged' given the horrors that confront them. Their humanity would resist it." ***-Tommy J. Curry***

To Black men: I see you. I hear you. I love you.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by India R. S. Goodwin has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair

Dr. Glenn Hudak

Committee Members

Dr. Leila Villaverde

Dr. Jewell Cooper

Dr. Craig Peck

March 15, 2023
Date of Acceptance by Committee

March 15, 2023
Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my committee, Drs. Glen Hudak, Leila Villaverde, Jewell Cooper, and Craig Peck, thank you for always pouring into me. I am forever changed as a scholar because of you all. To my husband, Benjamin, L. Goodwin, II, thank you for supporting me from start to finish, and for showing a tremendous amount of love and grace as I worked to reach this milestone. To my parents, Linwood and Michelle Smith, thank you for not only instilling in me an appreciation for scholarship but also a compassion for mankind. To Dr. Erica Horhn, thank you for always being the gentle, yet truthful, nudge I needed. To all who make up my village and who have motivated me to keep going: You have listened to my tears, encouraged my laughter, and eased my apprehensions, for all of which I am grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I: RECONSIDERING GEN(RE)(DER): SHIFTING OUR CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF GENRE WITH RELATION TO BODIES OF LITERATURE AND BLACK MALE BODIES

The secondary English curriculum often reserves major literary works that are written by Black authors and that amplify Black voices for units of study designed to showcase Black writers of and Black life in specific eras: two most common being the Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights Era. Such a relegation makes not only cursory the contributions of these writers to the literary canon but also makes peripheral the plight of an entire group of people, even more so that of the Black male. For, even when students are introduced to literature by Black women authors, the Black male figures are often portrayed as abusive, predatory, or hyper-sexual. *The Color Purple*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and *Beloved* are just a few examples of places where prominent Black male characters are characterized as any one, if not all, of these things. Coupled with the caricatures of Black males seen in literature written by white authors, this type of exposure to Black men as deficit and as dangerous, calls for some curricular insight that makes way for readings that render the Black man as human, not as Other. As such, I ultimately seek to develop Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre along with four accompanying signposts for analyzing this newly defined body of literature. Beers and Probst (2013, 2016, 2017) are credited with the language of *signposts* related to literary analysis. They define *signposts* as common features of fiction and nonfiction texts that help students understand and engage with their reading. In the coming chapters, I will detail my original signposts and model their potential use. Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre is a needed contribution to a current landscape of literary analysis that perpetuates deficit frames of thinking as it relates to Black male bodies. Additionally, the work outlined here serves as a precursor to further

professional development that can be facilitated with secondary English teachers as they refine the ways in which they read and teach certain texts.

Concerns and Contemplations

One major concern of secondary English teachers is the Eurocentric nature of the literary canon in which they are expected to engage students. In my current position as an Educational Consultant for grades 6-12 English, I have had countless conversations with teachers of this content about how they might address this dilemma. An idea that prevails most is providing supplemental texts that offer varied cultural perspectives while maintaining thematic connections. Each time this suggestion rears its head—which is almost inevitably—a subsequent issue arises: While texts available in required curricula often perpetuate the marginalization of Black bodies, so do many of the instructional practices to which students are subjected. When teachers provide supplemental text, most often they are doing so to be more culturally responsive and inclusive; however, the reality is even when reading a "less conventional" text students still use standard practices to make meaning from it. They are not given a new set of strategies to help them navigate the text with criticality. They are rarely, if ever, given prompts that require them to consider how the experiences of racialized bodies (more specific to my work, Black male bodies) shape one's analysis of the literary piece. Furthermore, students are not given opportunities to discuss how their interpretations of presented racialized experiences impact the ways in which they encounter and engage racialized bodies. As such, my work around theorizing Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre does not only account for a need for a more diversified canon, but more importantly it provides a potential roadmap for reading texts about the Black male through a lens specific to honoring his lived experience and to challenging common portrayals of him in both literature and life.

In identifying the above as a trend and an issue within the secondary English curriculum, I began to question how I might disrupt this commonplace practice. Additionally, from my work with grades 6-12 English teachers, I understood the nature of a curriculum that used specific structures and elements of various genres to provide students with a foundation for analyzing text. I also recognized the lack of nuance that was present when laying said foundation. As stated before, students are not necessarily provided strategies for textual analysis that is unique to the context Black male [literary] bodies, rather they are equipped with approaches that are specific to overall text structure. When it comes to text written about Black males and their lived experiences, nuance is necessary, an assertion that led to the below research questions. And, it is with these questions in mind that I moved forward with the task of generating a genre and literary framework that I hope will be unique to the experiences and existences of Black males.

1. How can Curry's (2017) distinction between gender and genre—as it relates to Black men and boys—contribute to the current instructional landscape of secondary English?
2. How might secondary English teachers and students use a literary framework specific to the lived experiences of Black men and boys to challenge gendered associations of Black masculinity?

Curry (2017) notes, "This America makes corpses of Black males. It is simply the reality of our day that Black males die. This death, however, is shunned, cast out of the halls of the university, and avoided at all costs by disciplines. This reality has not transformed any of the decadent theories that Black tie Black manhood to the caricatures of the 1970s. Black men are thought to be latent rapists—The Black Macho of old—violent patriarchs, a privileged Black male, craving the moment he is allowed to achieve the masculinity of whites. These mythologies, of decades

long gone, remain the morality of disciplines and the political foundation from which racist caricatures become revered concepts" (p. 1). This assertion represents perfectly what I refer to as the humanization of Black male bodies. As long as Black men and boys are viewed as the caricatures that that have been created about them, they are not being treated as human. Instead, they are demonized as violent, patriarchal beings.

Considering Contentions

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts represent my introduction of a framework that considers Black masculinities within the context of literature and literary analysis. I recognize this research may welcome some contentions specific to feminist movements aimed at dismantling the oppressive nature of patriarchal systems. A leading voice in feminist theory is bell hooks (2014) who argues that Black men, more specifically Black male Civil Rights leaders of the 60s, embody(ied) and enact(ed) the "same sexist socialization white men are inundated with" (hooks, 2014, p. 102). bell hooks (2014) further declares, "people are absolutely unwilling to admit that the damaging effects of racism on black men neither prevents them from being sexist oppressors nor excuses or justifies their sexist oppression of black women" (p. 88). I would argue the latter sentiments are not beliefs myself or Curry (2017) intend to uphold with our respective research endeavors. Instead, we are furthering dialogue regarding what Connell (1987, 1995) has coined as *hegemonic masculinity*. Hill Collins (2006) synthesizes the concept of *hegemonic masculinity* as follows:

> Rejecting the term patriarchy as overly simplistic, men's studies scholars introduced the phrase *hegemonic masculinity* to refer to the dominant form of masculinity in any given society, as well as marginalized and subordinated masculinities that characterize experiences of men whose race, class, religion, ethnicity, age, sexuality, or citizenship

> category place them within subordinated groups. This move in turn created the space to view representations of white masculinity and black masculinity not as descriptions of nature inherited from nineteenth-century biological science but as social constructions rooted in American race relations. (p. 78)

Like all social constructs, patriarchy is nuanced, and the question of whether Black men are privileged or oppressed by gender (Johnson, 2018; Mutua, 2006) is not one I, nor Curry (2017), claim to have a definitive answer. What we do offer, however, are what we believe to be contributions to a body of anti-racist research methodologies (Dei, 2005) and anti-racist literacies (Stanley, 2014) that contextualize gender in relation to Black male bodies.

Intersections of Race and Gen(re)/(der)

As a person who has made a career out of her love for literature, the concept of genre is far from foreign to me. What I had not considered, however, is ways the term may be applicable to a body of literature that is specific to Black male bodies. Viewing Black males as genre-ed, helps to generate a more specific conceptualization of the subjugation of Black men. In his book, *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood*, Curry (2017) discusses what he has termed *Man-Not* or *Man-Not(ness)*, a concept that speaks to the "nonbeing" of Black men as well as contributes to his argument for a shift in language (from *gender* to *genre*) as pertains to the Black male. He writes:

> *Man-Not(ness)* is a term used to express the specific genre category of the Black male. *Genre* differs from *gender* by the distance Black males share with Western man a priori, and, by consequence, patriarchy. Whereas gender asserts that historical and social orders, defined by the biologic marker of sex, are in fact synonymous with the historical and

> sociological location of Black males, genre expresses how the register of nonbeing distorts the categories founded upon white anthropology or that of the human. (p. 6)

In support of his proposed shift in terminology, Curry (2017) reiterates his earlier claim, which is for men the term *gender* denotes an inherit link to patriarchy, and subsequently humanity, that results solely from the presence of male genitalia. This is a link Curry (2017) asserts does not exist for Black males (p. 41, 106,), thus making necessary the shift to using *genre* in relation to Black male bodies and the subjugation they experience because of their gender designation. (p. 231). To this point, Curry (2017) says, "Nonbeing expresses the condition of Black male being—the nihility from which it is birthed. Away from the bourgeois order of kind expressed by man, genre is specific to the kind, the type of existence expressed by the Black male" (p. 7). Curry's (2017) notion of genre being "specific to the kind, the type of existence expressed by the Black male" (p. 7) is central to my theorizing of a literary genre specific to Black males' experiences as gendered bodies. While it is from Curry's (2017) theorizing the *Man-Not* that his distinction between *genre* and *gender* emanates, it is the latter that has most inspired my work. My goal is not to take up the nuances of his argument and those that counter to the *Man-Not*, rather it is to re-imagine the secondary English classroom in ways that account for the multiplicities and vulnerabilities of Black men and boys.

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre represents a category[1] of literature characterized by the subjective nature of Black male authors narrating, either personally or via surrogate, a journey of consciousness as experienced by Black male bodies. As I will echo throughout this project, my goal is not to create confines within Black Male Consciousness as

[1] In Chapter III, I discuss my use of genre as a context opposed to a category, so I will not use this space to delineate that distinction.

genre (BMC) must operate but to hopefully provide a new context through which this literature can shift the way both teachers and students not only read this body of literature but also how they read Black male bodies. This is a shift I also encountered as I moved from a more generalized approach to my research to one that is more nuanced in nature. At the start of this project, I thought it enough to specify that my work would deal with Black males. After all, this designation did pay tribute to the intersecting identities of this group. However, my introduction to the work of Tommy Curry (2017) reshaped the way I think about this intersection of race and gender as it relates to Black males. More specifically, his work has refined my notion of genre and the ways in which this term can not only denote the differentiation of various bodies of literature but how it also applies to, what he considers, the non-gendered bodies of Black men (Curry, 2017, p. 151). In illustration of this point, Curry (2017) states: "In reality, Black males are genre-ed as non-human and animalistic in the minds of whites, but our theories relish assigning the death of Black males to the generic description of racism, a notion not thoroughly analyzed in identity scholarship and unable to adequately capture the specific kind of oppression and violence that defines Black male existence" (p. 245). This proposed shift away from *gender* and toward *genre* in relation to Black male bodies is what most influenced the trajectory of my work.

I believe the development of a new literary genre alongside specific signposts for analysis will unlock the possibility of interpretations and discourse that center the humanity of and violence[2] against Black males. Frankly, offering students texts that feature a Black male protagonist does not inherently serve to center Black males and their lived experiences. In fact,

[2] Violence here refers to the various ways Black men and boys are victimized: historical, theoretical, physical, emotional, sociological, etc.

there are texts written by and about Black males that do just the opposite and instead perpetuate racist perceptions of this demographic. Along these lines, Enjeti (2018) attests, "We don't need nor have we ever needed to teach books written by white authors that capitalize on inaccurate stereotypes and vulgar and barbaric tropes about marginalized communities." She continues, "…it's high time educators realized that our policies about racism in school texts must go far above and beyond a conversation about racial slurs. Indigenous and students of color deserve to have the same privilege in education that white students have always had—the opportunity to examine and imagine the full extent of their humanity in literature" (Enjeti, 2018). As such, my conceptualization of a textual analysis framework specific to the Black male's lived experiences may be novel, but, as seen in Enjeti's (2018) words, the sentiment that underpins it is not. Making room for Black male students to "imagine the full extent of their humanity in literature" (Enjeti, 2018) means providing a set of instructional scaffolds and tools that are contextually unique to the Black male body as well as to a canon of literature specific to their real or represented lives. As such, the primary purpose and ultimate goal of my work is to offer a framework for literary analysis specific to a genre of literature written by and about Black men. According to Curry (2017), "Black men have developed a separate historical consciousness of manhood that is quite distinct from that of (white) masculinity. Instead of facilitating an exclusive cognizance of their own oppression in terms of race, Black males have explained their oppression consistently formulated in terms sensitive to their peculiar sexual oppression—their particular vulnerabilities as Black males who are unemployed, hunted, and discriminated against" (p. 25). As a concept, Black male consciousness represents awareness and articulation of an existence characterized not only by constructs of race but also by dominant ideas/interpretations of gender. And, while Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre aims to

account for this same awareness and articulation, I believe the introduction of a newly identified genre without the provision of appropriate frames for analysis would be negligent and would ultimately perpetuate a rendering of racist readings when engaging literature about Black males. I do not claim the recognition of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts for analysis will eliminate racist readings of these texts; however, I do imagine that the conceptualization of this genre and framework will provide teachers and students with the necessary support to not only recognize, but to interrogate, the systems and ideologies that have inherently influenced the way they read these texts, and ultimately the way they read the Black male bodies this literature represents.

Genre Theory: Curry's Literary Companion

Ultimately, using *genre* opposed to *gender* when discussing Black male bodies supports the idea that the Black man is a *type* of man, one who cannot be characterized using normative formations of patriarchy that do not account for his nonbeing. (Curry, 2017, 145) Curry's (2017) idea of genre is not of the literary persuasion, but it is similar in that it provides a context specific to Black men and boys. This connection is important to note, as I use John Frow's extensive (2015) work on genre and genre students as a literary companion to Curry's (2017) research on Black males' and their lived experiences. The goal of this project is not to provide detailed insight into all aspects of genre/genre theory, for John Frow (2015) has already undertaken that task; as such, I use Frow's (2015) work inform my decisions in refining my original concept of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre. He states, "Genre, we might say, is a set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning. In using the word 'constraining' I don't mean to say that genre is simply a restriction. Rather, its structuring effects are productive for meaning; they shape and guide, in the way that a builders'

form gives shape to a pour of concrete, or a sculptor's mould shapes and gives structure to materials. Generic structures both enables and restricts meaning, and is a basic condition for meaning to take place. I take it that genre theory is, or should, be about the ways in which different structures of meaning and truth are produced in and by the various kinds of writing, talking, painting, filming, and acting by which the universe of discourse is structured. That is why genre matters: it is central to human meaning-making and to the social struggle over meaning (Frow, 2015, p. 10).

Simply, genre does not refer merely to the physical structuring of a text but is a matter of what meaning said structure helps create, and although Frow (2015) is referring to literary bodies, I would argue that the same is true for Curry (2017) whose major claim is that using *genre* in reference to Black males more accurately accounts for historical and sociological dehumanization of their flesh (pp. 7, 222-225). It is my hope that Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre helps teachers and students interrogate the historical and social ideals that have shaped perceptions of Black manhood. One way I aim to do this is by enabling as well as restricting meaning (Frow, 2015) by providing readers parameters (signposts) that encourage the meaning-making process while ideally avoiding textual analysis that further dehumanizes Black male bodies. These parameters can also be viewed as supports and scaffolds that may potentially be reduced or eliminated once readers begin to instinctively interrogate their interpretations against internalized biases that influence them. Additionally, classification of literature helps provide the reader with the necessary context for interpreting a text. The genre of a text determines the approach. When the reader is aware of the organization, structure, and content of the text, their interaction with said text is more likely to yield an analysis centered less on biased

ideals they have internalized and more around the framework of analysis that accompanies the genre in use. Frow (2015) maintains three major points pertaining to the interpretation of genres:

1. Genre analysis is not about classification but about interpretation and use. Assigning a text to a particular genre is a step in deciding how to interpret it.
2. Genre is not a property of a text but a framework that we impute to it; but this imputation is neither arbitrary nor idiosyncratic, since the conventions of a genre are shared by members of a discourse community.
3. Genres define a set of expectations that guide our engagement with texts; these expectations are structured as cues which frame a text in particular ways and which may take a particular material form. (p. 133)

These key ideas reinforce my decision to not only create a new class (genre) of literature but to also provide a set of signposts to accompany it. It is not enough to simply proclaim that a group of texts are now categorized as Black Male Consciousness (BMC). When lacking a framework for evaluating texts, genres are left open to interpretive mayhem. Genres are specific and require specialized interpretation. As such, the signposts accompanying Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a genre, require that the reader remain attentive to how aspects of language, structure, and voice either empower or other Black male bodies. Curry's (2017) physical interpretation and Frow's (2015) textual use of *genre* are important, both individually and collectively, to the development of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre, and even more imperative to the creation of the signposts for analysis: stream of consciousness, double consciousness, caricatures, and dominant/counter narratives. Curry's (2017) introduction of genre as identity makes specific a context that accounts for Black males' myriad lived experiences. Frow's (2015) work regarding genre theory provides nuance to the notion of genre. And while both Curry

(2017) and Frow (2015) agree that at genre refers to a *kind*, they are both also abundantly clear that *kind* for them is less about categories but are more akin to the social and historical contexts in which certain bodies, either corporeal or literary, operate.

Signposts for Analysis: An Overview

Conceptualizing an original genre—Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre—along with accompanying signposts for analysis required that I engage with various literary pieces that could potentially be the *kind* of text that aligns with my definition of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre. Ultimately, I selected four novels that could possibly fit within the parameters of this theorized literary genre: *Native Son, Between the World and Me, The Fire Next Time,* and *Black Skin, White Masks.* Since my work is designed to ultimately impact the ways in which students in the secondary English classroom interact with a specific body of literature, I chose to use texts that students may encounter in various levels of high school English courses. Additionally, all the selected texts were written by Black male authors writing about the multiplicities of life as experienced by Black male bodies. Once I finalized the text selections, I began to consider what it was I wanted the reader to do with them. Pulling from my extensive experience with curriculum and instruction for secondary English (grades 6-12), it did not seem sufficient to simply create what could be viewed as just another way of categorizing pieces of literature. To help avoid perpetuating practices that do not account for the varied and unique experiences of Black male bodies, I began the process of refining this new context/lens through which I want readers to approach these texts and the like. This ultimately led to the development of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and related signposts for analysis (detailed in Chapter IV). In creating this framework for literary analysis, I used tenets of hermeneutic thinkers (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 11)—consciousness, language, truth—to identify trends across

and connections between the foundational literature (Table 1) that has influenced my work, and while this is not a hermeneutic study, Zimmerman (2015) discusses three major hermeneutic claims of hermeneutic thinkers; these claims assisted in the organization and articulation of thematic connections between the authors and/or concepts that influenced my development of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the accompanying signposts for textual analysis. The three major claims of the hermeneutic thinker, as outlined by Zimmerman (2015), are nature of consciousness, nature of truth, and importance of language (pp. 11–15). He states the following of each claim respectively:

> They argue that consciousness itself is shaped by the way in which we inhabit the world (p. 11). Moreover, culture, language, and upbringing shape our attitudes long before we make conscious decisions. The community or tradition to which we belong gives us the lenses through which we see the world. (p. 12)
>
> Disengaged-self people argue that we should suppress our personal beliefs or prejudices in ` to escape the ideological blinders of tradition. Those who champion a hermeneutic view of truth, however, object that past texts or events hold meaning for us in the first place because we stand within a tradition that has provided us with the very concepts through which we are connected to the past in a meaningful way (p. 13). Such suppression blinds us to our guiding influences and thus prevents us from understanding why we believe what we believe (p. 13).
>
> …hermeneutic thinkers argue that language guides our perception intrinsically. … They believe that our perception of the world and our thought depends on an intricate linguistic web of words and concepts that develop historically over time. (p. 15)

I use the three major claims of hermeneutic thinkers (Zimmerman, 2015) to organize how I introduce and engage literary works, major concepts, and theoretical frameworks that have helped shape this project. As depicted in Table 1, there are several authors and works foundational to my research: (Curry (2017), Fanon (1967, 2008), Dubois (2004, 2016), Ahmed (2006). This chart also provides a visual representation of how I use the tenets of hermeneutic thinkers (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 11) —consciousness, language, truth— as the lens through which I approached these texts individually and collectively. Thus, these foundational works, coupled with the tenets of hermeneutic thinkers (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 11) informed my development of the four signposts for analysis: double consciousness, stream of consciousness, caricature, dominant/counter narrative.

Table 1. Foundational Framing of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre and Signposts for Analysis

Foundational Works	**Consciousness** **Double consciousness** **Stream of consciousness** **(Dubois, Fanon)** consciousness relies on one's relation to/place in the world; disruptions to one's consciousness helps further shape lived experience	**Language** **caricatures** **(Curry, Ahmed)** language matters; words we use to characterize Black males work to either dismantle or reinforce stereotypes
Application of Thinking	**Truth** **dominant/counter narratives** **(Baldwin, Coates, Staples, Wright)** dominant narratives are based on presuppositions of truth (traditions, habits, beliefs); counter narratives offer a new truth	

In a later chapter, I detail each signpost, give insight into its conception, provide models for possible application. More immediately, however, I use Chapter II to highlight the results of my coding the foundational texts, a process that was directly influenced by thematic connections to the hermeneutic claims around consciousness, language, and truth (Zimmerman, 2015). It is

my hope and my intention, that this will give you, my reader, a clearer and more contextualized understanding of how Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the signposts for analysis were created, refined, and applied.

Curry (2017) asserts,

> The most immediate task before the Black thinker is to construct new concepts that can support the meanings of the actualities set before him in our own realities; in those instances in which our language, the grammar of our world, cannot support the weight of the Black thinker's reality, those structures and their cultural representations must be dissolved. Black men and boys cannot continue to exist as caricatures, with their humanity weighed against the mythologies holding them to be rapists, criminals, and aspiring patriarchs who aim to rule both women and society. These ideas are not paradigms of analysis; they are racist caricatures that claim theoretical relevance by the extent to which they make the sociological the ontological. (pp. 222–223)

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre is not intended to represent a stagnant category of literature. Instead, it is meant to be a *kind* of literature that—alongside the signposts for analysis—makes less avoidable commonly un(der)examined perils of Black masculinity and ways Black men and boys navigate them. I posit, however, that when teachers and students read texts that center Black males, the interpretive process should be accompanied by a framework for analysis specific to Black males' gendered subjugation (Curry, 2017). More explicitly, we must reconsider the ways teachers and students engage literature about Black male bodies. We must assess how our current instructional practices regarding textual analysis are often offer meaning-making opportunities that perpetuate caricatures often used to shape how Black males are portrayed and perceived. In acknowledging this need for philosophical and pedagogical shifts

that explore what Callejo Perez et al. (2014) refer to as those "grey spaces where individuals can address concepts of social justice and equity" (p. 51), I have developed original signposts for analysis—stream of consciousness, double consciousness, caricatures, and dominant/counter narratives—to serve as lenses through which teacher and students interpret Black male [literary] bodies. In Chapter IV, I expand and engage further each signposts for analysis; however, below I offer a brief explanation of each to provide some insight into how I imagine it may function alongside text.

Stream of Consciousness: A Signpost of Disruption

Traditionally, stream of consciousness in literary works is characterized by the seamless sharing of a character's/speaker's thoughts or feelings regardless of any environmental disruptions (McGilvary, 1907). This can be seen through an author's use of monologues or soliloquies, which allow for an uninterrupted look in the thoughts and/or feelings of the character/speaker. Additionally, stream consciousness has been a major area of study among psychologists. In fact, Natsoulas (1992), discussing the extensive work of William James (1892) states,

> James's final view was otherwise: the proceeding from moment to moment of one's consciousness consists of a succession of discrete temporal units of consciousness [3, 4]. Any momentary instance of consciousness follows immediately upon the just previous momentary instances belonging to the same stream, except for possible time gaps in consciousness's presence. The succession of instances of consciousness keeps on coming until it gets interrupted for an instant or much longer by a time gap in which there is no consciousness at all (though absence of consciousness cannot be subjectively detected, according to James, but only in some cases inferred from signs).

At first glance, my conceptualization of stream of consciousness was most akin to James's (1892) idea, until he makes mention of the lack of consciousness that occurs during a time gap. As it relates to Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre, however, this disruption is key, for it does not represent some cursory event that may or may not influence the trajectory of the narrative. Instead, this disruption causes a racial awakening of sorts that impacts not only the character/speaker but also affects the meaning-making process for the reader. Stream of consciousness is important to Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre not only because it offers the reader a first-hand glimpse into the thoughts/feelings of the character/speaker, but it gives the reader access to another dimension of thought and feeling experienced by the character/speaker. This dimension is characterized by the raw, uninhibited emotion felt by the character/speaker when he is jolted into a racial reality where he is feared, subjugated, and assaulted.

Double Consciousness: A Signpost of Duality

"*Double-consciousness* is a concept in social philosophy referring, originally, to a source of inward "twoness" putatively experienced by African-Americans because of their racialized oppression and devaluation in a white-dominated society" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014). This duality is imperative to the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) genre as it provides a level of insight to those readers who are members of the dominate society and as such do not have to concern themselves with an "inward twoness" since they are operating in a world that values their person. More importantly, this signpost helps to produce an environment where Black males are humanized and the complexities of their internal processes as a hunted body are acknowledged and appreciated.

Caricature(s): A Signpost that Dismantles

Historically, Black men have been stereotyped as lazy, inept, violent, sexual deviants, a "foundation from which racist caricatures became revered concepts" (Curry, 2017, p. 1). A key aspect of reading texts identified as belonging to the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) genre is recognizing the ways it dismantles negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies. Like the other signposts, this is not necessarily and explicit action. For example, a Black male character may be seen opening doors and carrying groceries for his elderly, female neighbor. While words like chivalrous and kind are not used directly, these are characteristics the reader may assign based on the character's actions. This is important for readers, both Black and White[3], who are constantly exposed to messages about Black males that both generalize and dehumanize their racialized bodies. Instead of reinforcing such messages, the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre serves to invalidate them.

Dominant/Counter Narrative(s): A Signpost that Decenters

At first glance, this signpost can seem similar to *caricatures*. However, there is a level of nuance that differentiates them. *Caricatures* is more about generalized characteristics that have been assigned to and follow the racialized bodies of Black males. The signpost *Dominant/Counter Narrative(s)* differs because it is more about the development of major themes in the text. The goal of this signpost for analysis is that the reader traces the refinement of themes based on the prevalent voice and perspective of the Black male character/speaker opposed to generating thematic connections that are grounded in their preconceived notions of that have been imparted on them by dominant society's deficit view of Black male bodies.

[3] While race is not always represented as a binary, here I use Black and white due to the historical context of these racial groups.

Table 2. Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre and Signposts for Analysis Overview

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre (*n.*) a category of literature characterized by a subjective nature of narrating a journey of consciousness as experienced by the Black male		
Signpost	**Function**	**Description**
Stream of Consciousness	serves to ***disrupt*** the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of new racial enlightenment or awareness	character or speaker has an event that offers a contrast to his current views of or experiences with Blackness
Double Consciousness	serves to recognize the ***duality*** of Black male bodies	character or speaker details thoughts, experiences, etc. that demonstrate the enactment of double consciousness to obtain a desired outcome (i.e., survival)
Caricature(s)	serves to ***dismantle*** negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies	detailing thoughts, events, or interactions that diverge from deficit views of Black male bodies
Dominant/Counter Narrative(s)	serves to ***decenter*** whiteness by offering counter narratives to dominant ones.	development of themes that explicitly or implicitly counter dominant narratives that surround Black male bodies

Much like the above chart, this introductory chapter serves as initial insight into the connections between those works foundational to my research and my original concept of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a genre and as a new context for textual analysis. As you will see outlined in the following section, I use subsequent chapters to discuss each signpost in relation to the author and/or concept from which it was inspired. Additionally, this section and those that precede it work in tandem to provide an overview of an identified problem and the proposed solution that is Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a genre and the accompanying signposts for textual analysis.

Navigating this Project: Outline and Organization

Considering Black Male Consciousness within the Context of Genre: A Framework for Engaging and Analyzing Bodies of Literature that Center Black Male Bodies and their Racialized Experiences is organized into five chapters. The introduction, "Reconsidering

Gen(re)(der): Shifting Our Conceptual Understanding of Genre with Relation to Bodies of literature and Black Male Bodies," is designed to outline the identified issue and to summarize a proposed solution. This chapter also provides a cursory look at components of my original framework for analysis of text written by and about Black males.

Chapter II, "Method[ologie]s for Meaning: Creating Context and Concepts for Textual Analysis," is presented in two parts. Part I discusses how I use hermeneutics not only as a methodology of interpretation, but also as a tool for organizing my primary sources thematically, a decision that assisted in the eventual development of the four signposts for analysis. Part II charts my correlation between the foundational works and my original signposts for analysis.

Chapter III, "Reconsidering Gen(re)(der): Moving Away from the Gendering of Black Male Bodies Toward a Genre of Black Manhood," provides a concentrated look into the major work of Curry (2017): *The Man-Not*: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood. Curry's (2017) research on gender and genre in relation to the Black male body not only appealed to my love of literature and my formal training in literary analysis, but more importantly it aligned with my belief that Black males are not monoliths, and we are in need of instructional practices that encourage readers to view them as such in both the written word and in the living world. This also led to my exploration of genre theory and the work of Frow (2015), which I also detail in Chapter III. Combined, these authors and concepts heavily influenced my decision to create Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts for textual analysis, a framework intended to disrupt the dehumanization of Black male bodies by attending to the multitude of ways one can simultaneously be Black and male.

Chapter IV, "Recontextualizing Literary Renderings in the Classroom Space: De-Genderinig Black Male Bodies through a Genre of Black Malehood," is about application. I

introduce excerpts from literary texts that students may encounter in the various levels of secondary English curricula. While teachers and students will most likely engage in larger sections of the text, it is not feasible that I reproduce such considerable portions of these literary pieces of literature. As such, I use excerpts to highlight ways my original signposts for analysis—stream of consciousness, double consciousness, caricature(s), dominant/counter narratives—may present themselves in the identified texts. I also include exemplars to model the interpretive shift that will ideally occur when students employ the aforementioned signposts.

Chapter V, "Considering Historical and Instructional Implications of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre," takes a look at historical structures like common school and its influence on modern attempts at school reform that can often be detrimental to the academic and life outcomes of Black males students. From here, I explore how teachers may use instructional models like Socratic or Paideia Seminars alongside the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework to engage students in discourse that centers the unique experiences of Black male bodies, while also attending to state and local mandates. Lastly, I consider professional learning opportunities within the context of a national educational organization.

A Look Inward: Positionality and My Research

Before concluding, I believe it of the upmost importance to acknowledge my positionality as a researcher of literature that reflects lives not characterized by an intersection of identities with which I identify. As a researcher, it is not only important that I recognize how my positionality influences the ways in which I make sense of the world; it is just as, if not more so, important that I acknowledge how it helps to shape my interpretations and articulations of the world as experienced by others. Along these lines, Wanda Pillow (2011), in her discussion of reflexivity states, "This focus requires the researcher to be critically conscious through personal

accounting of how the researcher's self-location (across for example, gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality), position, and interests influence all stages of the research process" (p. 178). As a Black woman researching Black males, I must recognize that my race alone does not make me an "insider." Reminiscent of this notion is Curry's (2017) assertion that "Black and female allows for standpoints, histories, and experiences that serve to ground (gender) theory, while Black and male is taken to be the historical perspective that must be disowned to free these other-gendered, not-male voices" (p. 5). As such, while my Blackness may allow me to understand or even share some aspects of Black males' experiences, I must keep in mind, that race alone does not afford me full access into or complete comprehension of their lived experiences. In fact, it is the intersection of Black and female that poses a challenge for me. I have a personal investment in and an emotional attachment to the Black male students and the failed state of the education the system provides them. As the wife, daughter, sister, granddaughter, aunt, cousin, and friend to a host of Black males, I know intimately the fear of sending them into a world where they are judged, harmed, and even killed because of their skin. It can be easy to visualize the faces and hear the stories of my loved ones when interacting with quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to this demographic. Thus, I must intentionally and continuously evaluate my emotions and motives when working with narratives and information highlighting the experiences of Black men. One way of doing so is by remaining critical and reflexive of self throughout the research process. Glesne (2015), in quoting Emerson et al. (1995, p. 216), states,

> The reflexive lens helps us see and appreciate how our own renderings of others' worlds are not and can never be descriptions from outside those worlds. Rather, they are informed by and constructed in and through relationships with those under study. (p. 145)

It is this level of reflexivity that helps guide my work in a way that I hope does not further objectify Black males, but ultimately orientates my research around them as subjects of their own narratives. For, as Curry (2017) states, "Black males are often theorized as defective" (p. 3). He continues, "Because Black men are not subjects of—or in—theories emanating from their own experience, they are often conceptualized as the threats others fear them to be. This fear has been used to legitimize thinking of Black males as degraded and deficient men who compensate for their lack of manhood through deviance and violence" (p. 3). This insight is imperative to my reflexiveness as a Black, female researcher who is creating a framework unique to Black, males and their experiences as portrayed in literature. As, I must keep at the forefront that I am still researching and writing from a relational schema that could put me dangerously close to creating a theory that emanates from my own experiences with Black males opposed to those that derive from their lived experiences.

Conclusion and Considerations

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

–Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Despite White America's treatment of Black men as dispensable, they matter. Language about Black men matters. Narratives about Black men matter. This work matters. A unique genre of literature that amplifies Black men's voices, acknowledges them as the authors of their own stories, shifting readers from an overreliance on normative frames (Smits & Naqvi, 2015) that devalue Black male bodies toward a utilization of lenses designed to humanize them. The need for a genre specific to the Black male experience results from the historicized victimization and the generalized gendering of Black men. Along these lines, Curry (2017) states: "Because Black men are thought to be 'not human,' there is a tendency to embrace their sociological condition as

their essential characteristics. Black males are thought to be the origins of their conditions rather than their conditions being the origin of their problems. The designation of Black males as problems in society, simultaneously enforced by our academic theories demanding the de-emphasis of their plight, allows such ideologies to operate without challenge" (p. 244). Too often, Black male characters are analyzed and discussed in ways perpetuating caricatures of them as lazy, as brutes, and/or as (sexual) deviants. Such dialogues and interpretations do not live in the classroom space exclusively. These views and ideals negatively impact Black males in every aspect of their lives: education, health care, job opportunities, economics, etc. Moreover, when the conditions of Black males are de-emphasized, this makes cursory the systemic oppression that plagues their existence and that is the largest predictor of their outcomes.

The development of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre—along with the accompanying framework for textual analysis— is the actualization of my belief that we must provide teachers and students with ways interrogate literary traditions and their connections to social constructs like gender and race. In reflecting on my time both studying and teaching literature, I realize that I never thought to view literary concepts like genre as systems, so I certainly did not think of them as something oppressive or in need of examination regarding race and gender. What I now understand is that genre, like social systems (education, economics, etc.) are rooted in dominant beliefs and practices. Genre in its purest form is a way of categorizing [bodies of literature], but we must ask ourselves upon whose ideals did this concept originate and whose perspective was omitted? Additionally, since genre is also about interpretation, whose views and voices were most prevalent in deciding methods for interpreting specific types of texts? These are all questions I carry with me as I move forward in conceptualizing Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a potential genre of literary studies. The idea is to introduce a new way

of engaging literature—specifically literature that centers Black male bodies—in the classroom space while keeping in mind that it is not so much about the category (the what) but is more about the lens (the who) through which the literature is analyzed (the how). Additionally, my recognition of who genre both accounts for and who it excludes has been important to conceptualizing Black Male Consciousness as genre and the associated signposts for analysis because it helps me to remain what Schwalbe (2008) refers to as sociologically mindful throughout the process. Being sociologically mindful also means recognizing that much of what we do, both socially and personally, is out of habit. Schwalbe (2008) states, "Many of the ideas that hold the social world together are invisible because they are built into habit" (p. 19). He continues, "Once upon a time we were told why we should do a certain thing, or maybe we figured it out for ourselves, and now we do it without thinking. The guiding ideas are still there, though the visible only as habits" (p. 19). The use and analysis of literary genres is no different. Once upon a time I learned a very limited bit about genre. I could define it, and I could recite the various types. I carried this knowledge with me all through my formal education and into the classrooms where I taught and where I supported English instruction. My understanding and teaching of genre were habitual. I was told a thing and I lived by that thing. I never found any real reason to question it, until now, and I am so glad I did.

CHAPTER II: METHOD[OLOGIE]S FOR MEANING: CREATING CONTEXT AND CONCEPTS FOR TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Regarding hermeneutics as methodology,[4] Zimmerman (2015) states,

> No doubt, every field of knowledge, whether in the human or natural sciences, represents a certain mode of knowing, and thus follows a particular methodology that corresponds to its particular object[5] of study. The philosophical discipline of hermeneutics, however, is not a method aiming at a practical goal or particular reading. Rather hermeneutic philosophers are interested in understanding as such: how and under what conditions does understanding happen? Philosophical hermeneutics examines and describes what happens when understanding of any kind takes place. (p. 7)

Within my field of knowledge (secondary English instruction), I have experienced various modes of knowledge depending on where I was situated along the trajectory of my career. However, undertaking the task of creating a newly defined literary genre and framework for analysis specific to Black male bodies presented an unfamiliar field of knowledge for which I would need a methodology appropriate for the task at hand. While it is oftentimes recognized as a philosophical discipline, as a methodology hermeneutics framed my interpretations and synthesis of major concepts and theories that led to my conceptualizing Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the signposts for analysis. More specifically, as I engaged various concepts and philosophies concerning consciousness, race, and gender, through my use of hermeneutics as methodology I was able to identify common themes across foundational texts,

[4] Other authors considered were Rennie (2012) and Seebohm (2004).

[5] Note here that the intended objects are not Black male bodies, rather bodies of literature.

themes that that ultimately informed Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the signposts for analysis.

Three major hermeneutic claims were key to how I organized and articulated connections among those concepts and theories most influential to my development of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts:

> They argue that consciousness itself is shaped by the way in which we inhabit the world. (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 11). Moreover, culture, language, and upbringing shape our attitudes long before we make conscious decisions. The community or tradition to which we belong gives us the lenses through which we see the world. (p. 12)
>
> Disengaged-self people argue that we should suppress our personal beliefs or prejudices in order to escape the ideological blinders of tradition. Those who champion a hermeneutic view of truth, however, object that past texts or events hold meaning for us in the first place because we stand within a tradition that has provided us with the very concepts through which we are connected to the past in a meaningful way (p. 13). Such suppression blinds us to our guiding influences and thus prevents us from understanding why we believe what we believe. (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 13).
>
> … hermeneutic thinkers argue that language guides our perception intrinsically. … They believe that our perception of the world and our thought depends on an intricate linguistic web of words and concepts that develop historically over time. (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 15)

Table 3. Foundational Framing of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre and Signposts for Analysis

Foundational Works	**Consciousness** **Double consciousness** **Stream of consciousness** **(Dubois, Fanon)** consciousness relies on one's relation to/place in the world; disruptions to one's consciousness helps further shape lived experiences	**Language** **caricatures** **(Curry, Ahmed)** language matters; words we use to characterize Black males work to either dismantle or reinforce stereotypes
Application of Thinking	**Truth** **dominant/counter narratives** **(Curry, Baldwin, Coates, Fanon, Wright)** dominant narratives are based on presuppositions of truth (traditions, habits, beliefs); counter narratives offer a new truth	

As illustrated in Table 3, I use the three major claims of hermeneutic thinkers (Zimmerman, 2015) to organize how I introduce and engage literary works, major concepts, and theoretical frameworks that have helped shape this project. This chapter is separated into two sections. In the first, I discuss authors Du Bois (1897, 2004, 2016), Fanon (2008), and Freire (2016) in relation to the hermeneutic claim concerning consciousnesses (Zimmerman, 2015). I briefly discuss the various iterations of consciousness pertinent to the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework, with a specific focus on Black (racial) consciousness as it is most influential to the larger scope of my work. From here, as it relates to the hermeneutic claim regarding truth (Zimmerman, 2015), I chronicle my shift from Culturally Responsive Teaching to Critical Pedagogy and how this change contributes to the development of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and related signposts. I also highlight aspects of Critical Race Theory—specifically counter storytelling—as this too plays a key role in uncovering hidden truths within literary traditions. Lastly, I discuss the linguistic distinctions (gender vs. genre;

around vs. toward; etc.) introduced by Curry (2017) and Ahmed (2006) respectively, and the roles they play in trajectory of my research.

Part I

Consciousness: A Contextual Cognizance of Color

> … consciousness itself is shaped by the way in which we inhabit the world (p. 11). Moreover, culture, language, and upbringing shape our attitudes long before we make conscious decisions. The community or tradition to which we belong gives us the lenses through which we see the world. (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 12)

A word that stands out in the above quote is "lenses." I can only speculate, but I do not believe Zimmerman (2015) or the hermeneutic thinkers he envisions offer this word in its plural form due to an intimate knowledge of the duality faced by Black Americans, and even more specifically, Black men and boys. And, as I look upon the other words offered—culture, language, upbringing, community, and tradition—I recognize, that even if they may not for Zimmerman (2015), these aspects of life require that Black persons have a nuanced understanding of how inherent within each is the dichotomy of dominant culture (whiteness) and Blackness. In relation, Harrison (2010), in quoting Apple (2004), recounts: "Hegemony acts to 'saturate' our very consciousness, so that the educational, economic and social world we see and interact with and the commonsense interpretations we put on it, becomes the world, *tout court*, the only world" (p. 135). Du Bois (1897, 2004, 2016), in coining the concept of double-consciousness, acknowledges the effect of this saturation on Blacks in America:

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him

> see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 45)

Here, speaking "Within an American context W. E. B. Du Bois defines double-consciousness as Blacks being forced to view themselves through white perspectives while maintaining their own self definitions" (Black, 2007, p. 393). However, it is worth noting that "Works of Frantz Fanon, and other classic writers on colonialism, show evidence that colonized peoples also experience the condition of double-consciousness" (Black, 2007, p. 393). Specifically, Fanon (1967) says, "Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within he has to place himself … [His] customs and the sources on which they are based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him" (p. 110). This connection is important in that it highlights a central similarity between the lived experiences of these two Black men regardless of locality.[6] As such, I use the section immediately following to illustrate the similar experiences of these two unique individuals.

A Look at the Lived Experience: Du Boisian Double-Consciousness with a Fanonian Flair

For Black men and boys, whether they are in the United States or abroad, their existence and experiences are colored by the shade(s) of their skin. Their personhood is questioned in all regions of the world, humanity disregarded on both sides of the equator, and neither the

[6] This statement not meant to suggest that all Black men have the same or similar lived experiences irrespective of their location. Rather is key to understanding how the concept of double consciousness is not unique to one specific group of Black men

longitude and latitude of their locale provides respite. Du Bois (1897, 2004, 2016) writes from his perspective of being Black in America, while Fanon (2008) recalls his experiences as a colonized Black man from the Antilles. Neither Du Bois (1897, 2004, 2016) nor Fanon (2008) speak directly about the intersection of their race and gender; however, for the purposes of my work, I lean into this juncture as they are both Black men recounting their individual experiences with [racial] consciousness. DuBois's (1897, 2004, 2016) narration leads to his introduction of double-consciousness, a concept Fanon (2008) does not explicitly name, yet based on his experiences, it can be inferred he experiences it. Below, I reiterate experiences and sentiments of DuBois (1897, 2004, 2016) and Fanon (2008), respectively, to illustrate how [racial] consciousness is imperative to how they, as Black men, navigate and interact with a world (both in the United States and abroad) designed for their demise. In "Strivings of the Negro People" DuBois's (1897) coining and defining of "double-consciousness" comes after he recounts a pivotal moment of revelation:

> It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first burst upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned on me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others: or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. (p. 2)

Black consciousness is more than an awareness that one is Black. Instead, it is a matter of existentialism; it is about the duality of being. Frantz Fanon (2008) provides insight into this existential paradigm when he narrates his experiences as a Black man from the colonized island Martinique to aid his examination of his own racial consciousness. It can be inferred from Fanon's early discussion about the Black man and by his language use that awareness of one's existence as a racial being is innate and instinctive, even if they are not yet consciously cognizant of it. Fanon (2008) states, "The black man possesses two dimensions: one with his fellow Blacks, the other with the Whites. A black man behaves differently with the white man than does with another black man" (p. 1). This quote is part of Fanon's (2008) discussion regarding the intrinsic adherence to a "civilizing language" (p. 2) as a means of assimilation and status; however, I believe underpinning this is the colonized Black man's awareness of what it means to be Black in relation to the other. Acknowledging the need for alternate language and behavior when interacting with a white man, requires that the colonized must first be aware that one way has been deemed wrong and the other right. Moreover, there must be something within that leads him to speak in a manner demonstrating a command over white language, one of perceived civility, versus speaking in a manner that displays an intimate knowledge of the perceived language of savages, or Blacks. Overall, this rejection of blackness (Fanon, 2008, p. 3) is not only a symptom of colonization, but is also a display of unrefined racial consciousness, meaning the Black man has an implicit knowledge that his skin, in relation to the other, is an indication of perceived inferiority; however, he has not experienced the needed disruption to catapult him into a more radicalized Black existence.

Before discussing the above-mentioned disruption required for a Black man to intentionally engage his racial consciousness, I find it imperative to acknowledge the lens

through which Fanon (2008) is writing. Fanon (2008) is speaking from the perspective of the Antilleans, a colonized people. While Antilleans are indeed Black, they do not identify as such. Fanon (2008) writes,

> In the Antilles, the black schoolboy who is constantly asked to recite 'our ancestors the Gauls' identifies himself with the explorer, the civilizing colonizer, the white man who brings truth to the savages, a lily-white truth. The identification process means that the black child subjectively adopts a white man's attitude. (p. 126)

What we see here is the result of the colonized Black man's attempt to navigate a land occupied by both the colonized and their colonizers. He strives to leave in the past the native rituals of his people in hopes for a future comparable to that of his white counterparts. To do so he takes on the persona of his colonizers while labeling other persons of African descent as savages:

> Gradually, an attitude, a way of thinking and seeing that is basically white, forms and crystallizes in the young Antillean. Whenever he reads stories of savages in his white schoolbook he always thinks of the Senegalese. As a schoolboy I spent hours discussing the supposed customs of the Senegalese savages. In our discussions, there was a lack of awareness that was paradoxical to say the least. The fact is that the Antillean does not see himself as Negro; he sees himself as Antillean. The Negro lives in Africa. Subjectively and intellectually the Antillean behaves like a white man. But in fact he is a black man. He'll realize that once he gets to Europe, and when he hears Europeans mention 'Negroes' he'll know they're talking about him as well as the Senegalese. (Fanon, 2008, pp. 126–127)

What Fanon (2008) tells us here is that racial awareness can oftentimes become subordinate to racial assimilation. The Antillean has become so indoctrinated by the civilization of his colonizer

that he is unable to conceive that, even with his physical embodiment of blackness, the very individuals he looks upon as savages are more similar to him than they are different. What Fanon (2008) also demonstrates is that even in such cases, there will be a time and a place that this Black man will be forced to acknowledge himself as such, for

> As long as the black child remains on his home ground his life follows more or less the same course as that of the white child. But if he goes to Europe he will have to rethink his life, for in France, his country, he will feel different from the rest. (p. 127)

In both quotes, Fanon (2008) makes clear that the disruption the Black man must experience is one that takes place in a land where his blackness, no matter how refined he believes it to be, is still blackness. It is still the personification of darkness, the representation of inferiority, and the objectification of one's being. Moreover, these quotes do not signify an absence of Black consciousness. Instead, what they demonstrate is its compulsory nature, for Black consciousness is inherent (p. 114); its origin within the Black man can be traced back to his birth. And, even in a state of infancy and naiveté, it would be unfair to say that Black consciousness is absent in the Black man. Instead, I would assert that it is used quite frequently even if one lacks a metacognitive awareness of its usage. The earlier example involving the Black man's manipulation of language demonstrates how racial consciousness is ever-present in Black men, but how in its colonized state, it is co-opted to further elevate whiteness over Blackness. Additionally, the most recent citations regarding the circumstances under which the Antillean will eventually realize that he too is Black, further contribute to the idea that Black men's lived experiences continually shape and refine their racial consciousness.

Fanon's lived experiences as a Black man teach him that he is not only to be Black, but he must be Black in relation to the white man (Fanon, 2008, p. 90). To this point, Fanon (2008)

recounts an experience he had on a train when a young, white boy shouts out multiple times, "Look! A Negro!" An experience that resulted in the following: "… the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema" (Fanon, 2008, p. 92). Here the narrator is confronted by the fact that he is not simply another body, instead he is a Black body moving in a white world. It is in this moment that his racial consciousness becomes more explicit, more intentional. As such, he states: "I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Y a bon Banania*" (Fanon, 2008, p. 92). In making this assertion, Fanon (2008) demonstrates a heightened awareness of his blackness, an awareness that causes him to realize that until this point, the white gaze has determined his perception of self. His experience with this young boy, however, leads him to projecting a more "objective gaze" onto himself, thus leading to further development of his Black consciousness. As stated previously, racial consciousness is constantly present, but until now, it has been instinctive, like breathing or blinking. However, once the Black man is confronted with the truth about his racial identity, Black consciousness shows up in more strategic and more radical ways. For example, when approached by a white woman who says, "Look how handsome that Negro is" (p. 94), "The handsome Negro says, 'Fuck you,' madame" (p. 94). No longer looking to the white gaze to validate his human existence, he takes radical action to assert his Black existence. In fact, he states this explicitly in the following quote: "I don't believe it! Whereas I had every reason to vent my hatred and loathing, they were rejecting me? Whereas I was the one they should have begged and implored, I was denied the slightest recognition? I made up my mind, since it was impossible to rid myself of an *innate complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN.

Since the Other was reluctant to recognize me, there was only one answer: to make myself known" (Fanon, 2008, p. 95). Demonstrated here is the maturation of Black consciousness, a maturation that is accompanied by a confidence and by an authority that were and are often viewed as threats to the dominant (white) world. Yet, it is amid his denied entry into the white world, a world he mistakenly believed he had equal stake, that he becomes cognizant of his Black consciousness as a tool and of its usefulness in navigating a world constructed and dominated by the Other.

Freire and Fanon: A Discourse of Distinction

While I will not spend a great deal of time discussing the distinction between double consciousness and critical consciousness, I do find it worth mentioning, as Freire (1970, 2016) and his discussion of consciousness is a staple in many education programs, and there may be some who have not yet considered such a divergence. It could be argued that Black consciousness is merely a subset of Freire's (2016) critical consciousness; however, at the core of critical consciousness are class and education while Black consciousness centers on a racialized existence. The following quotes by Freire (2016) and Fanon (2008) highlight these differences: There are certain positions, attitudes, and gestures associated with the awakening of critical awareness, which occur naturally due to economic progress. These should not be confused with the authentically critical position, which a person must make his own by intervention in the integration with his own context. Conscientizacao represents the development of the awakening of critical awareness. It will not appear as a natural byproduct of even major economic changes but must grow out of a critical educational effort based on favorable historical conditions. (Freire, 2016, p. 15). Freire (1970, 2016) is explicit in his belief that critical awareness accompanies economic advancement; however, he also acknowledges that economic

status is not enough. The emergence of one's critical awareness hinges on the quality of his education, an education that for the Black man will never guarantee his entry into the white world, thus reinforcing the idea that critical consciousness and Black (double, racial) consciousness are of two separate veins. Fanon (2008) furthers this point when he states: "But nevertheless the notion of race does not intersect with the notion of class: the one is concrete and particular, the other is universal and abstract; one resorts to that which Jaspers names comprehension and the other to intellection; the first is the product of a psycho-biological syncretism and the other is a methodical construction emerging from experience" (p. 112). Essentially, critical consciousness (class) and Black consciousness (race) can potentially run parallel to one another, but will not overlap or connect. A Black man can be aware of his economic status and of his Blackness in relation to the white other. What he cannot do is exchange one level or form of consciousness for the other. What then, can we make of consciousness in the poor, Black man? Plainly put, Black will always be this man's primary identifier. Whether he is wealthy or poor does not determine his station in the world; his skin makes this determination.

Another point of contention seen in the above quotes deals with the ways in which Freire (2016) and Fanon (2008) trace the development of their respective forms of consciousness. Freire (2016) notes that critical awareness is awakened through educational efforts (p. 15), while Fanon (2008) asserts that Black consciousness is "a methodical construction emerging from experience" (p. 112). I believe Fanon (2008) would challenge Freire (2016) by informing him that education is not a suitable substitute for the lived experience. Any education received by the Black man—more specifically, in the case of Fanon (2008), the Antillean— is one designed and delivered by his colonizers. This is an education that immerses the Black man in a world that, as

seen in the example of the schoolboy, does not adequately prepare him for the day he realizes his inclusion in a white educational system does not alter the exclusionary nature of his skin, of his very being. Moreover, Fanon's (2008) use of the phrase "methodical construction" (p. 112) demonstrates how, unlike critical consciousness, Black consciousness— in its later stages of development—requires a set of deliberate actions that stem from one's lived experiences. Whereas critical consciousness, by definition, is refined only through the passivity of one's receipt of an education that is based on already "favorable historical conditions" (Freire, 1970, p. 15). The Black man does not have the luxury of such conditions; therefore, Black consciousness becomes even more necessary as he navigates a past and present wrought with racial injustice. Even amidst their differences, it is important to note that there is at least one similarity in Freire's (2016) and Fanon's (2008) articulations of consciousness: each acknowledges an awakening or emerging of consciousness, an acknowledgment that aligns with my previous dialogue regarding the inherent nature of Black consciousness. This innateness means that in the instances of both race and class, consciousness exists even before it is cultivated by experience or education. Furthermore, the compulsory nature of consciousness demonstrates that the perpetual presence of one's critical or racial consciousness plays an undeniable role, whether inadvertent or intentional, in the ways an individual interacts with the world around him.

Truth: Re-Examining Beliefs and Re-Engaging Self Toward a Pedagogy That Liberates

> Disengaged-self people argue that we should suppress our personal beliefs or prejudices in order to escape the ideological blinders of tradition. Those who champion a hermeneutic view of truth, however, object that past texts or events hold meaning for us in the first place because we stand within a tradition that has provided us with the very concepts through which we are connected to the past in a meaningful way. (p. 13). Such

> suppression blinds us to our guiding influences and thus prevents us from understanding why we believe what we believe. (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 13)

Zimmerman (2015) connects consciousness and truth perfectly when he states, "Our view of consciousness naturally informs our understanding of truth and how we obtain it" (p. 12). He continues, "For hermeneutics, knowledge is more than naming and describing objects; it involves understanding meaningful structures we already participate in" (p. 12). With this in mind, I discuss my shift from culturally relevant pedagogy to critical pedagogy, a shift that not only required my "understanding of meaningful structures" (i.e., education) in which I participate, but one that also contributed to the conception Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts for textual analysis.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is far from a new educational concept. However, like so many other attempts to increase the inclusivity of the learning environment, it has been modified, commodified, if you will, to further serve the hegemonic and capitalistic needs of the dominant culture. Far from the original aim of Ladson-Billings's (1995) research, culturally relevant pedagogy has been turned into a set of *sure-fire* steps and *best* practices that can be revealed through a school's or district's purchase of a one-size-fits-all, teacher-proof set of diverse texts and culturally relevant lessons. Truthfully, this is not the critical view I have always held of the current state of implementation regarding culturally relevant pedagogy, but it is one I have developed as I have become more engaged with studies of critical pedagogy. As an educator who is now more equipped to critically think through such implementations and their nuances, I have chosen to use this section to interrogate my complicit (and in some ways, active) participation in the promotion of a co-opted version of culturally relevant pedagogy. More importantly, I will

discuss my shift from cultural relevance to critical pedagogy as the theory with which I now most align.

I have both complicity and actively promoted the use of practices—as they relate to culturally relevant pedagogy—that I truly believed to be of great need and value. In my previous role as a district leader for literacy, I spent time creating and presenting professional development on culturally relevant teaching. In a sense, I "drank the Kool-Aid." I was doing good work. Right? I was creating opportunities for educators to reflect on their current classroom practices and determine ways in which they could rethink said practices to make them more responsive to the cultural needs of their students. My presentations provided teachers with tips for both inside and outside the classroom. I even gave some easy-to-implement best practices they could use almost immediately to make their classrooms more inclusive of the diverse cultures represented among their students. My audience did not only include teachers in my own district. No way. This was too good not to share with the masses. So, I took my show on the road. I presented at state conferences and even got a paying gig at a school in a different city. While I was not selling a product, in a sense I was still contributing to the capitalistic commodification of culturally relevant pedagogy. How so? For one, there is the obvious exchange of funds for my "expertise" on the topic, a barter I now find problematic. Additionally, education has become an industry where individuals are always looking to purchase a better educational experience for "all" students. And, my presentation of culturally relevant pedagogy as a set of practices sends the message that this too can be boxed and bought for standardized use in classrooms.

During my time facilitating professional development on culturally relevant pedagogy to middle and high school English teachers, my school district also had an initiative to increase the

academic achievement (as measured by standardized tests) of African American male students. In connection, one of the resources I provided participants was a list that featured what Alfred Tatum (2006, 2009, n.d.) refers to as "enabling texts." In alignment with the district focus, my list was comprised of titles that had the African American male student audience in mind. Tatum (2006, 2009, n.d.) defines "enabling texts as those that move beyond a sole cognitive focus—such as skill and strategy development—to include a social, cultural, political, spiritual, or economic focus" (p. 46). I have since revisited this concept of an "enabling text." Per the definition, this text merely includes a *focus* on social, cultural, political, spiritual, *or* economic dimensions of students' lives. The issue here is that a *focus* on these things does not promise a critical evaluation of the systems that perpetuate the continued oppression of marginalized students. A *focus* on these things could mean the furthered support of the hegemonic and neoliberal ideals that are representative of the dominant culture. Additionally, the use of the word *or* indicates that these texts do not address how the intersections, not individual aspects, of students' identities contribute to their subjugation. I have also since revisited the list of texts I gave to my participants, and there are several cases where suggested texts do precisely what Andrade and Morrell (2007) assert when they state, "An oppressive rendering of a culturally diverse text is still oppressive" (p. 186). One example is my suggested use of the book *The Other Wes Moore*. This book chronicles the lives of two Black males who are both named Wes Moore. While they are both from the same area and both experienced troubles as youth, one ultimately gets incarcerated while the other becomes a formally educated scholar, writer, and speaker. At the time this seemed like a good text to help offer Black males a selection that features an African American male who "beat the odds." With a more critical perspective, I now see an issue—because there are several—with the premise of this book; it juxtaposes the lives and

choices of two individuals, which aligns with neoliberal views of individualism and meritocracy. By comparing these two men, attention is drawn away from the structures and systems that create the space for such disparities to occur. Additionally, this text and several others feature Black male protagonists who "beat the odds" or "make it out." Why is this? Why is there a proclivity towards selecting texts that send the message that when a Black male is "successful" it is because he, as an individual, managed to beat some type of environmental odds? To mirror my previous statement, what we should be doing is helping students to question the greater implications in these texts: the oppressive systems and practices that create both the visible and invisible "odds" that marginalized groups face. With respect to this new perspective, a major goal of my work around developing Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a genre is to place Black male students at the center of texts in which their racialized bodies are traditionally made the objects of study. The framework and signposts introduced in Chapter I (and further detailed in a later chapter) are meant to both realize and actualize this goal. Additionally, I aim to provide teachers with a sense of empowerment as they move into new territory teaching these texts as a body of literature that requires a specific approach. And, while I cannot undo the deeds of presentations past, it is my hope that this research leaves educators with some insight into the ways in which they can embody the spirit of critical pedagogy and teach literature in ways that challenge the status quo.

Teaching literature in ways that challenge the status quo can be actualized through the use of counterstories, a Critical Race Theory (CRT) methodology. There are indeed other tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that influence my work, one being interest convergence. As summarized by Monk (2020), interest convergence "is the idea that some White people address racial injustice to advance, and not retract their position of dominance in society" (p. 26). Ideally,

my offering of a genre—and an accompanying framework for analysis— specific to the experiences of Black males is an attempt to create a divergence of supremacist ideologies and liberating pedagogies. I hope to create opportunities for literary analysis that make Black male voices prevalent opposed to cursory, thus working to counteract a convergence of interests that oftentimes allows the classroom to remain a space where dominant ideals and narratives are accepted as finite and true. Relatedly, another key function of my work is to help dismantle dominant narratives that perpetuate caricatures and misrepresentations of Black males. As such, I embarked on an exploration of how we may be able to accomplish such a dismantling by attending to the Black male experience through a specific literary context, thus the birth of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the major focus on Critical Race Theory's (CRT) counterstory.

Before going further into this concept, it is important to note that not all marginalized narratives are counterstories (as seen with *The Other Wes Moore*), and "while there are indeed many marginal/ized narratives, the measure remains whether the tellers and stories subscribe to CRT's tenets, particularly in their critique of dominant ideology (e.g., liberalism, whiteness, color blindness) and their sustained focus on social justice as an objective. In other words, what are the folks using the counterstory to *do*?" (Martinez, 2020, p. 17). Keeping this in mind helps teachers, as well as other composers of curriculum, keep central the purpose for using counterstories—social justice. This is also imperative to my original idea of Black Male Consciousness as genre and the accompanying framework for textual analysis. More specifically, my deepened understanding of counterstories lead to the creation of the signpost *dominant/counter narrative(s)*. This signpost for analysis serves to decenter whiteness by offering counter narratives to dominant ones. It requires the reader to examine the development

of themes that explicitly and/or implicitly counter dominant narratives that surround Black male bodies. This is in direct relation to Yosso's (2006, pp. 14–15) assertions specific to counterstories:

- Counterstories build community among those who have been marginalized within society, and communicate that we do not struggle alone.
- Counterstories challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center, and provided a context to understand and transform established belief systems.
- Counterstories nurture community cultural wealth, memory, and resistance. In affirming pedagogies and knowledges cultivated in minoritized communities, counterstories preserve community memory of the history of resistance and oppression.
- Counterstories facilitate transformation in education.

Everyday teachers are faced with the task of making complex, impromptu decisions. How they respond to these pedagogical forks in the road can either contest or confirm dominant narratives. Counterstories require that they are both reflexive and reflective with relation to these choices and how they impact the classroom space for the racialized bodies of their Black male students. This is not at the exclusion of students representing other racial and ethnic groups; however, since my work focuses on the experiences of African American male students, I will refer solely to this group throughout my discussion of CRT. As indicated by the discussion above, imperative to the inception of this genre is the CRT tenant of counter storytelling. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017),

> Some of the critical storytellers believe that stories also have a valid destructive function. Society constructs the social world through a series of tacit agreements mediated by

> images, pictures, tales, tweets, blog postings, social media, and other scripts. Much of what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel but is not perceived to be so at the time. Attacking embedded preconceptions that marginalize others or conceal their humanity is a legitimate function of all fiction. (p. 49)

Important to distinguish is the use of the word "fiction." While my proposed genre of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) may include works of fiction, it differs from Delgado and Stefancic's (2017) usage in that he is referring to the misguided information in much of today's print and digital literature, information that is used to create and/or contribute to falsehoods pertaining to Black males. And, while fictional pieces of literature are undoubtedly a part of the BMC canon, the goal is to disrupt the traditional ways in which these works are analyzed with relation to race and gender, more specifically, with relation to Black maleness. During my preliminary interactions with such literature, I found there is plenty of room for the introduction of a specific approach to literary studies, one that centers the Black male, his consciousness, and his lived experiences. As such, using principles of critical pedagogy and critical race theory, I conceptualized Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a genre, along with a set of signposts of analysis, to provide opportunities for Black male students to make central their own racial awareness as well as their understanding of racial power dynamics. In fact, Enjeti (2018) attests, "We don't need nor have we ever needed to teach books written by white authors that capitalize on inaccurate stereotypes and vulgar and barbaric tropes about marginalized communities." She continues, "…it's high time educators realized that our policies about racism in school texts must go far above and beyond a conversation about racial slurs. Indigenous and students of color deserve to have the same privilege in education that white students have always had—the opportunity to examine an imagine the full extent of their humanity in literature" (Enjeti, 2018).

My conceptualization of a genre and signposts specific to Black males' lived experiences may be novel, but, as seen in Enjeti's (2018) words, the sentiment that underpins it is not.

My development of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre as a framework for textual analysis resulted from my engaging the truth about the educational structures in which I not only participated, but perpetuated. What I came to understand is that truth is essential to self. To be honest about the world around us, we must first be honest with ourselves about the role(s) we play in it. We must examine those traditions, those habits (Schwalbe, 2008) if you will, that contribute to our belief systems and ultimately to our actions. Along these very lines, Zimmerman (2015) asserts, "…hermeneutic thinkers insist that we need to redefine objective truth as something we take part in rather than something we merely observe from a distance. We don't make truth happen; rather truth is something that happens to us. Truth is an event" (p. 13). My shift from the current, misrepresented state of Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) to Critical Pedagogy is the result of such an event. I only wish I had experienced this sooner, but while I cannot revisit the past, I can hopefully secure a future of secondary English instruction that centers truth opposed to advancing a teaching and learning cycle that perpetuates oral and written traditions of unexamined falsehoods. One way my work aims to disrupt this aspect of current practices in literary analysis is by the introduction of the signpost "dominant/counter narrative(s)," which serves to decenter whiteness by examining dominant narratives and introducing counter narratives, specifically as it pertains to Black male bodies. The goal is not to place Black male students in a space where they are coerced, or forced, to take on the taxing role of teaching their white peers (and teachers) about the daily assaults on their personhood. Instead, this signpost, and my framework as a whole, is my contribution to creating classroom spaces where readers (teachers and students) of Black male bodies [of literature] are "engaged"

individuals who, unlike “disengaged-self people” do not suppress their personal beliefs or prejudices in order to escape the ideological blinders of tradition, but instead understand that past texts or events hold meaning for us in the first place because we stand within a tradition that has provided us with the very concepts through which we are connected to the past in a meaningful way. (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 13) He continues: “This is simply to say that we see the world through the eyes our cultural traditions provide for us. Without these conceptual lenses that allow us meaningful access to reality, we would be blind. Hermeneutic thinkers hold that we arrive at truth because we already participate in something greater that conveys truth about us, such as the language and cultural tradition we inhabit. It is therefore misleading to pretend such influence does not exist or to repress it for the sake of supposed objectivity. Such repression blinds us to our guiding influences and thus prevents us from understanding why we believe what we believe” (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 13) My framework, and specifically the dominant/counter narrative(s) signpost provides readers with a lens for interrogating those literary and societal traditions that color the way we perceive and receive Black male bodies.

Language: Linguistic Distinctions for Literary Delineations

> … hermeneutic thinkers argue that language guides our perception intrinsically. … They believe that our perception of the world and our thought depends on an intricate linguistic web of words and concepts that develop historically over time. (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 15)

In his work around hermeneutics, Zimmerman (2015) states,

> Those who champion a hermeneutic view of truth, however, object that past texts or events hold meaning for us in the first place because we stand within a tradition that has provided us with the very concepts through which we are connected to the past in a meaningful way. (p. 13)

Essentially, what he asserts is that it is not the text or events themselves that hold meaning, rather it is the traditions, the habits if you will, in which they are grounded that not only hold meaning, but that also connect us to the "past in a meaningful way" (Zimmerman, 2015, p. 13). This can also be true for language, as the words we use to articulate our understanding of the world, or in this case literature, are steeped in traditions that have predisposed us to connotations of meaning that color the ways we not only engage Black males in bodies of literature, but also how we engage Black male bodies. As it relates to language, Curry (2017) plays the most significant role in the conceptualization of my original genre and framework for literary analysis, but I would be remiss if I did not also mention Sara Ahmed (2006), another contemporary philosopher who has influenced the trajectory of my research. Both Curry (2017) and Ahmed (2006) make linguistic distinctions that I find necessary to challenging current perceptions about and treatment of Black males in the classroom and the world at large. Curry (2017) discusses a shift in using "genre" opposed to "gender" in relation to Black male bodies. In coining his concept the "Man-Not," Curry (2017) explains, "*Man-Not(ness)* is a term used to express the specific genre category of the Black male. *Genre* differs from *gender* by the distance Black males share with Western man a priori, and, by consequence, patriarchy" (p. 6). He continues, "Away from the bourgeois order of kind expressed my man, genre is specific to the kind, the type of existence expressed by the Black male" (Curry, 2017, p. 7). The designation of *genre* opposed to *gender* in relation Black male bodies is not only key to the naming of my original framework but is even more imperative to honoring the lived experiences of Black men and boys. Considering Black males within the context of genre encourages the reader (as it pertains to my framework for literary analysis) to dismiss notions of hegemonic masculinity and recognize the varieties of masculinities (Curry,

2017, p. 3) encompassed by Black male bodies and expressed in bodies of literature that depict the "non-gendered" (Curry, 2017, p. 6) existence/experiences of Black men and boys.

Ahmed's (2006) work helped cultivate my nuanced understanding of orientation —being orientated "toward" versus being orientated "around." Refining my understanding of this concept assisted me in creating a framework that moves away from current instructional practices that further objectify and gender Black male bodies based on historicized and hegemonic notions of Black malehood, toward the development of a framework that makes dominant a genre of Black male voices and their articulation of their varied experiences. An orientation toward something is a matter of space and direction. Ahmed (2006) states, "the thing that we are orientated toward is what we face, or what is available to us within our field of vision. What we are orientated toward is determined by our location; it is a question of the phenomenality of space" (p. 115). One cannot be orientated toward something that is not available or visible to them. Such availability and visibility are not literal in that the item must not be opaque and/or tangible; it must only be attainable (or perceived to be as such). Ahmed (2006) continues, "'Towardness' is a mode of directionality; it is about the direction I face when facing another, as a direction that can refer to motion and position. If the direction is about the position I take toward something, then I am still facing that thing: it is in front of me insofar as it has my attention. One faces where one is not, but a 'not' that is reachable or available from where I am, and indeed in being so always reflects back or shows where one is located" (p. 115). In a previous section, I discuss how physical location (whether in the United States of abroad) does not alter how Black male bodies are (mis)represented, (mis)treated, and (dis)regarded. Please note, I still support this assertion and use location in this section to discuss one's positionality in terms of where one [individual] is in relation to another. Locality is important to one's orientation toward a thing as it can define what

an individual is “not” in relation to the object that is within view/reach. This identification of what one is “not” in turn makes others reachable objects. And, when placed within a specific context (e.g., race), this recognition of difference can lead to the othering of entire groups of people. This is seen in Ahmed’s (2006) discussion on the creation of the Orient, an analysis in which she concludes, “Most important, the making of ‘the Orient’ is an exercise of power: the Orient is made oriental as a submission to the authority of the Occident” (p. 114). She continues, “It is the fact that what I am orientated toward is ‘not me’ that allows me to do this or to do that. The otherness of things is what allows me to do things ‘with’ them” (p. 115). Prior to my shift from Culturally Responsive Pedagogy to critical pedagogy, I was conducting research that orientated me and my work toward Black males. I had turned them into objects, something to be attained. An attainment, that when assessed more critically, is recognized for what it truly is: the manipulation and control of Black males’ narratives as viewed through the white gaze and articulated through hegemonic linguistic traditions. To help broaden my efforts at avoiding this objectification, and consequently gendering, of Black male bodies, I looked to Ahmed’s (2006) explanation of what it means to be orientated *around*. While an orientation *around* is less about space and direction, it is still a matter of positionality. To this point, Ahmed (2006) writes, “To be orientated around something means to make that thing central, or as being at the center of one’s being or action. I might be orientated *around* writing, for instance, which will orientate me *toward* certain kinds of objects (the pen, the table, the keyboard)” (p. 116). As such, I designed Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the signposts for analysis to be a framework that places at the center Black male voices/experiences. It is my desire that in doing so, I will contribute to the secondary English classroom a model for literary analysis (further detailed in Chapter IV) that no longer makes Black men and boys objects, but rather the subjects of their

own narratives, thus eliminating (at most) or limiting (at least) instances where Black male bodies are forced to operate within the parameters of historicized and faulty premises of Black malehood.

When we engage [students] in literary analysis based in linguistic traditions that do not honor the nuanced, racialized experiences of Black men and boys, we further perpetuate racist renderings of the literary and physical bodies of Black males. My framework, Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre, aims to alter this practice by introducing signposts for analysis (detailed in Chapter IV) that are rooted in language contrary to traditional and current practices in textual analysis. It can be said that I am merely creating a new "tradition" of language; however, I would argue that this framework offers an alternative that encourages both teachers and students to engage texts with a level of criticality with which they cannot examine those caricatures of Black malehood presented in literature but that are also prevalent in societal messages about and treatment of Black male bodies. The distinctions in language as outlined by Curry (2017) and Ahmed (2006) not only played a major role in (re)framing my work around Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre, but they also contributed a great deal to the development of the signpost *caricatures*, which serves to dismantle negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies through the analysis of thoughts, events, characterizations, and/or interactions that diverge from deficit views of Black male bodies. Language matters, and the words we use to characterize Black males in works of literature or otherwise serves to either refute or reinforce supremist stereotypes surrounding Black male bodies. As such my original framework for textual analysis is designed to help readers (teachers and students) be more inclined to orientate their examination of text around (Ahmed, 2006), opposed to toward (Ahmed, 2006) the Black male bodies and experiences represented within

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre. This will ideally help circumvent renderings of readings that further manipulate and perpetuate ill-informed and misguided narratives/caricatures that have been created about Black men and boys, narratives that are often preserved not only in literature, but by our analysis of it, thus why I rely on literary and philosophical works written by Black male authors documenting the dual existence and plural experiences of Black males as voiced through Black men.

Part II

Coding for Consciousness

Hermeneutics as a methodology informs the thematic categories (consciousness, language, truth) I use to organize key theories/concepts, while thematic analysis is the method I employed to contextualize them. According to Rennie (2012), in quoting Braun and Clark (2006): "The method of thematic analysis has been characterized by Braun and Clarke (2006) as entailing six phases: (a) Familiarization with the data by reading and re-reading them, noting down initial ideas. (b) Attending to interesting features of the data that are coded in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, and collating the data pertinent to each code. (c) Searching for themes, wherein codes are collated into potential themes and data are gathered relevant to each theme. (d) Reviewing the themes, involving checking to see if they work in terms of the codes given to parts of the data as well as the entire set of data, leading to generation of a thematic map of the analysis. (e) Defining and naming themes, accompanied by ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells; and so generate clear definitions and names for each theme. And (f), Producing the report, which provides final opportunity for analysis involving the selection and analysis of compelling extracts from the data; then final analysis of the extracts, which relates them back to the research question and

literature" (p. 394). This explanation of thematic analysis outlines the steps taken as I refined my research. This section is not meant to illustrate the full extent of my engagement with each of these steps. Instead, Table 4 represents the ultimate findings and themes gleaned from various readings and multiple interactions with each text, theory, and/or concept that frames Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and its signposts, my original framework for textual analysis. While I do use additional texts for the literary exemplars in Chapter IV, I have chosen to keep my coding specific what I deemed my foundational texts. I chose this process because I preferred the coding be representative of the broader themes that influenced the signposts opposed to it being indicative of ideas specific to a handful of literary selections. This choice also aided in the creation of signposts that can be seen as more universal to Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre opposed to being limited in scope.

Table 4. Thematic Connections & Coding

Foundational Texts: Thematic Connections & Coding	
Coding Key **DC-** Double Consciousness **D/CN-** Dominant/Counter Narratives	**SC-** Stream of Consciousness **CS-**Caricatures
Text	**Major Theme(s)**
The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood (Curry, T. 2017)	1. Black men and boys are not recognized as having various modes of masculinity. 2. *Genre*, opposed to *gender*, best refer to the existence and experiences of Black males. 3. Theories about Black men and boys often employ deficit models and are rarely (if ever) are produced by Black males themselves.

Major Claims/Quotes	**Code(s)**
"This America makes corpses of Black males" (p. 1).	D/CN
"Black men are thought to be latent rapists—the Black macho of old—violent patriarchs, a privileged Black male, craving the moment he is allowed to achieve the masculinity of whites" (p. 1).	CS
"These mythologies, of decades long gone, remain the morality of disciplines and the political foundation from which racist caricatures become revered concepts" (p. 1).	CS

Foundational Texts: **Thematic Connections & Coding**	
Coding Key **DC-** Double Consciousness **D/CN-** Dominant/Counter Narratives	**SC-** Stream of Consciousness **CS-**Caricatures
"While the male descendants of colonizers are recognized for the naturally occurring varieties of masculinities within their group, the insistence on multiple masculinities has often been denied to Black men who are descendants of slaves" (p. 3).	D/CN
"Black males are often theorized as defective. As the gender theorist Arthur F. Saint-Aubin explains, 'Even when [B]lack men are the ostensible subjects (they are, in fact, objects) of workshops, special journals editions, etc., they are still marginalized theoretically and compared to a norm by which they are usually judged lacking'" (p. 3).	CS D/CN
"This dispersion/deconstruction/dismissal of the race category has concrete consequences for Black males attempting to situate and describe their experience and history, because race has been the only category offered by disciplines through which Black men can theoretically articulate their experience" (p. 5).	D/CN
"The Black man, deprived not only of his identity but also a history and existence that differs from his brute negation, experiences the world as a *Man-Not*" (p. 6).	D/CN
"*Man-Not(ness)* is a term used to express the specific genre category of the Black male. *Genre* differs from *gender* by this distance Black males share with Western man a priori, and, by consequence, patriarchy" (p. 6).	D/CN CS
"Whereas gender asserts that historical and social orders, defined by the biologic marker of sex, are in fact synonymous with the historical and sociological location of Black males, genre expresses how the register of nonbeing distorts the categories founded upon white anthropology or that of human" (p. 6).	D/CN CS
"Away from the bourgeois order of kind expressed by man, genre is specific to the kind, the type of existence expressed by the Black male" (p. 7).	D/CN CS
"Simply stated, analyzing Black males as the Man-Not is a theoretical formulation that attempts to capture the reality of Black maleness in an anti-Black world" (p. 7).	D/CN
"Because it is rooted in colonial formulation of sex designation, not gender, the Man-Not recognizes that racial maleness is not coextensive with our synonymous to the formulations of masculinity, or patriarchy, offered by white reality" (p. 7).	D/CN CS
"To suggest that Black males are, in fact, gendered patriarchs is an erasure of the actual facts of anti-Black existence and a substitution of the white anthropological template at the core of negating Black (male) existence as its end" (p. 7).	D/CN CS

Foundational Texts: **Thematic Connections & Coding**	
Coding Key **DC-** Double Consciousness **D/CN-** Dominant/Counter Narratives	**SC-** Stream of Consciousness **CS-**Caricatures
"Far too often, Black males are projected into academic projects as the stereotypes individuals perceive them as rather than how they actually exist in the world" (p. 8).	D/CN CS
"*The Man-Not*" was thought of as a corrective of sorts, as a concept of Black males that could challenge the historical and theoretical accounts of Black men and boys that have proliferated throughout disciplines and are taken as gospel in academic research" (p. 9).	D/CN CS
"…*The Man-Not* is an attempt to reflectively engage the conditions that dictate the formation of Black male sexualities and the historical vulnerabilities that obscure our viewing of them as actual realities of Black manhood" (p. 9).	D/CN
"As a normative aspiration, hegemonic masculinity depends on socializing members of a given patriarchal society to and ideal form. Connell is very clear that 'the cultural ideal (or ideals) of masculinity need not correspond at all closely to the actual personalities of the majority of men. Indeed the winning of hegemony often involves the creation of models of masculinity which are quite specifically fantasy figures" (p. 16).	D/CN CS
"The biological reduction of Black masculinity to its sexual assignment of 'male,' largely built on the vacating of the historical peculiarity of race and the consciousness of Black men have gained through centuries of racist colonial oppression, allows all sorts of evils to be ahistorically ascribed to the aspirations of Black manhood" (p. 26).	CS
"Under racialized systems of oppression, gender was not categorical, but situational. Black males were deemed rapists and killed with this stereotype serving as the justification. Black women did not suffer under such a label because they were, in fact, women and for much of history deemed incapable of rape. Hutchinson points out to intersectional theorists that their categorical accounts of race and gender are far too simplistic to actually capture the multiple dynamics and histories involved in Black maleness…" (p. 151).	D/CN
"Denying the specific disadvantages of Black men and boys is proof of the position Black males occupy as *already dehumanized—disposable*—and allows for outrage and condemnation of the efforts to have their deaths and plights recognized publicly. No other group of people could be so easily dismissed and condemned as 'privileged' given the horrors that confront them. Their *humanity* would resist it" (p. 217).	D/CN

Foundational Texts: Thematic Connections & Coding	
Coding Key **DC-** Double Consciousness **D/CN-** Dominant/Counter Narratives	**SC-** Stream of Consciousness **CS-**Caricatures
"Mutua realized that intersectionality demonstrates a resistance toward seeing Black males as gendered and vulnerable and that new terminology was needed to capture the gendered disadvantage of Black maleness's multidimensionality. She concludes, 'What [B]lack men were experiencing was not sexism, a term that over a long history seemed to me to reference the discrimination and oppression of women, but rather was gendered racism'" (p. 221).	D/CN
"Black men need nuanced theories and accounts of their social and existential position instead of analytic statements asserting that power, domination, and privilege are attached to their maleness" (p. 222).	D/CN
"The Black male is never understood as the center of history and the conditions that uniquely affect him. His rape, his death, his poverty, his marginality—the material facts of his existence—will remain negotiated and negated by the overarching ideological interest of those unwilling to accept the actual condition and disadvantage of Black men and boys" (p. 222).	D/CN
"Black men and boys cannot continue to exist as caricatures, with their humanity weighted against the mythologies holding them to be rapists, criminals, and aspiring patriarchs who aim to rule both women and society" (p. 222).	D/CN CS
Synopsis of Coding	
Curry's (2017) work around *gender* and *genre* as it relates to generalized and historicized characterizations of Black men and boys provides a foundation for understanding how current theories often perpetuate faulty notions of Black malehood. As seen in the identified claims/quotes above, he argues for the use of language that is more appropriate to the articulation of Black males' lived experiences. The use of *genre* opposed to *gender* opens a space for the challenging of narratives and caricatures that, more times than not, color Black male bodies as deviants.	
Text	**Major Theme(s)**
The Souls of Black Folk (Du Bois, W.E.B. 2004, 2016)	1. Black (racial) consciousness in inherent, even during times of dormancy.
Major Claims/Quotes	**Code(s)**
"Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows" (p. 9).	DC SC

Foundational Texts: Thematic Connections & Coding	
Coding Key **DC-** Double Consciousness **SC-** Stream of Consciousness **D/CN-** Dominant/Counter Narratives **CS-**Caricatures	
"After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (p. 9).	DC
Synopsis of Coding	
While it may be considered fairly evident why I coded these key passages as *stream of consciousness* and *double consciousness*, I find it necessary to take a moment to assert that this designation extends just beyond nomenclature. It is important to my research and the lens through which I analyze texts—and subsequently the lens I ultimately urge others to employ—that I recognize both *stream of consciousness* and *double consciousness* as a not just metacognitive states, but as states of being. For example, in the first passage, the "suddenness" with which Du Bois (2004, 2016) recognizes his difference, is not a fleeting moment in time, in fact it is a defining moment in his existence. Key to *double consciousness* as a code, and additionally as a signpost for analysis, is the nuanced understanding that *double consciousness* is not merely an awareness of one's Blackness, but it is a keen attentiveness to how one must navigate other's perceptions of said Blackness.	
Text	**Major Theme(s)**
Black Skin, White Masks Fanon, F. (1967, 2008)	1. Racialized bodies often experience an inherited, historicized depiction self.
Major Claims/Quotes	**Code(s)**
"The black man possesses two dimensions: one with his fellow Blacks, the other with Whites. A black man behaves differently with a white man than he does with another black man" (p. 1).	DC
"Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man" (p. 90).	DC
"From one day to the next, the Blacks have had to deal with two systems of reference. Their metaphysics, or less pretentiously their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with the new civilization that imposed its own" (p. 90).	DC

Foundational Texts: **Thematic Connections & Coding**	
Coding Key **DC-** Double Consciousness **D/CN-** Dominant/Counter Narratives **SC-** Stream of Consciousness **CS-**Caricatures	
"In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one's body is solely negating. It's an image in the third person" (p. 90).	DC
"Beneath the body schema I had created a historical-racial schema. The data I used were provided not by 'remnants of feelings and notions of the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, or visual nature' but by the Other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories" (p. 91).	CS
"I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors. I cast an objective *gaze* over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders…" (p. 92).	SC CS
"I made up my mind, since it was impossible to rid myself of an *innate complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the Other was reluctant to recognize me, there was only one answer: to make myself known" (p. 95).	SC
"My blackness was there, dense and undeniable. And it tormented me, pursued me, made me uneasy, and exasperated me" (p. 96).	DC
"Still regarding consciousness, black consciousness is immanent in itself. I am not a potentiality of something. I am fully what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. There's no room for probability inside me. My black consciousness does not claim to be loss. It *is*. It merges with itself" (p. 114).	DC SC
Synopsis of Coding	
My choice to code majority of the above passages as *double consciousness* may not be as evident as with the previously discussed text. Many of the experiences recounted by Fanon (1967, 2008) reveal his understanding of what it means to navigate a white world in a Black body. Additionally, he recognizes that even his own perceptions of self have been heavily influenced by dominant, historicized narratives created negate his very existence. You will notice in Chapter IV, I opted to use *Black Skin, White Masks* to model the stream of consciousness signpost even though the double consciousness code is represented heavily here. This is a prime example of how signposts are not exclusive to one text and can work in tandem with one another.	
Text	**Major Theme(s)**
Queer Phenomenology Ahmed, S. (2006)	1. "Around" is the inherent orientation of whiteness. 2. Blackness—along with all its histories and inheritances—precedes the body; whiteness lags behind. 3. Black bodies always face their Blackness; they are orientated toward it.
Major Claims/Quotes	**Code(s)**

Foundational Texts: **Thematic Connections & Coding**	
Coding Key **DC-** Double Consciousness **D/CN-** Dominant/Counter Narratives	**SC-** Stream of Consciousness **CS-**Caricatures
"…consciousness is intentional: it is directed toward something" (p. 27).	DC
"First, consciousness itself is directed or orientated toward objects, which is what gives consciousness its 'worldly' dimension" (p. 27).	DC
"If consciousness is about how we perceive the world 'around' us, then consciousness is also embodied, sensitive, and situated. This thesis does not simply function as a general thesis, but can also help show us how bodies are directed in some ways and not others, as a way of inhabiting or dwelling in the world" (p. 27).	DC SC
"…the repetition of actions (as a tending toward certain objects) shapes the contours of the body. Our body takes the shape of this repetition; *we get stuck in certain alignments as an effect of his work*" (p. 92).	CS
"Racism ensures that the black gaze returns to the black body, which is not a loving return but rather follows the line of the hostile white gaze" (p. 111).	CS
"Colonialism makes the world 'white,' which is of course a world 'ready' for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects within their reach. Bodies remember such histories, even when we forget them. Such histories, we might say, surface on the body, or even shape how bodies surface (see Ahmed, 2004). In a way then, race does become a social as well as bodily given, or what we *receive* from other as an inheritance of this history" (p. 111).	CS
"As many have argued, whiteness is invisible and unmarked, as the absent center against with others appear only as deviants or as lines of deviation (Dyer 1997; Frankenburg 1993). When I refer to whiteness, I am talking precisely about the production of whiteness as a straight line rather than whiteness as a characteristic of bodies" (p. 121).	CS
"White bodies are habitual insofar as they 'trail behind' actions: they do not get 'stressed' in their encounters with objects or others, as their whiteness 'goes unnoticed.' Whiteness lags behind such bodies" (p. 132).	CS
"White bodies do not have to face their whiteness; they are not orientated 'toward' it, and this 'not' is what allows whiteness to cohere, as that which bodies are orientated around" (p. 132).	CS
"Whiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it, or for those who get so used to its inhabitance that they learn to not see it, even when they are not it" (p. 133).	SC

Foundational Texts: **Thematic Connections & Coding**	
Coding Key **DC-** Double Consciousness **D/CN-** Dominant/Counter Narratives	**SC-** Stream of Consciousness **CS-**Caricatures
"Of course, spaces are orientated 'around' whiteness, which means whiteness is not 'what' we are orientated 'toward.' We do not face whiteness; it 'trails behind' bodies as what is assumed to be given. The effect of this 'around whiteness' is the institutionalization of certain 'likeness,' which makes nonwhite bodies uncomfortable and feel exposed, visible, and different when they take up space" (p. 133).	DC
Synopsis of Coding	
The duality made available through double consciousness can also aid in the dismantling of negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies by these very bodies. Much of Ahmed's (2006) discussion highlighted in the text above focus on the role of whiteness in relation to orientation. As the social default, whiteness is centered and is therefore the standard against which Blackness is defined and negated. Understanding the consequences of centering whiteness means recognizing its role in the creation of those stereotypes and generalizations that precede the Black [male] body and how this ultimately influences how one navigates the world. As such, *double consciousness* and *caricatures* are the primary codes used for the highlighted passages.	

Conclusion

This chapter has served to delineate those concepts/theories most instrumental to my work. Part 1 discussed how I use hermeneutics not only as a methodology of interpretation, but also as a tool for organizing my primary sources thematically, a decision that assisted in the eventual development of the four signposts for analysis. Part 2 provided a detailed overview of my interpretation of these sources in direct correlation to said signposts. Ultimately, my work is one of interpretation. My hope is that this work not only serves as a framework, but also as an example of practice that encourages literary and bodily interpretations of Black males that are no longer steeped in the historicized caricatures and narratives that are often (if not most times) ascribed to Black male bodies. *Method[ologie]s for Meaning: Creating Context and Concepts for Textual Analysis* represents my engaging hermeneutics as a methodology and thematic analysis as my chosen method for data analysis and interpretation. Each was imperative to my

creation of the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework and the signposts for analysis. Both hermeneutics (as methodology) and thematic analysis (as method) led me to (re)adjust the lens through which I approached a research project concerning the lived experiences of Black men and boys. As such, I shifted from a trajectory of research that would further objectify Black male bodies to a framework of interpretation that gives voice to various articulations of Black malehood, a genre specific to the kind, the type of existence expressed by the Black male (Curry, 2017, p. 7). Without the introduction of frameworks like Black Male Consciousness (BMC) and its related signposts for analysis, teachers and students in secondary classrooms are likely to continue rendering readings of Black male [literary] bodies originating from narratives about them rather than by them.

CHAPTER III: RECONSIDERING GEN(RE)(DER): MOVING AWAY FROM THE GENDERING OF BLACK MALE BODIES TOWARD A GENRE OF BLACK MANHOOD

While Chapter II provided an overview of various methodologies and theories that contribute to the overall organization and development of my work, this chapter serves to discuss more explicitly the authors and concepts most influential to the inception of my original genre, Black Male Consciousness (BMC), and its accompanying framework for analysis. Curry's (2017) insight into gender and genre and their relation to the Black male body resonated with me as I did not want my project to be the development of a template for dehumanizing Black men. Additionally, his explanation of the decision to use the term *genre* to discuss the Black male experience appealed to my love of literature and to my formal training in literary analysis. As such, it led me to an exploration of genre studies, so I use the second half of this chapter to provide a brief overview of both genre and genre theory (Frow, 2015).

Curry on Current Black Male Theories and Schools of (Un)Thought

When you are not a member of a particular group, it can become almost instinctive to intellectualize the problems this group faces without thinking of ways to actualize potential approaches to addressing said problems. As a Black woman doing research pertaining to Black men, I can find, and have found at times, myself perilously close to doing just this. However, my introduction to Curry's (2017) work has helped me to remain both reflective and reflexive as I aim to use my research to speak up for Black males—even more specifically, Black male students— without speaking for or over them. One assertion Curry (2017) makes in relation to this point is as follows: "The Black male is unthought. He is an intuitive problem, an analytic failing designated by the negative ascriptions of Blackness and maleness. He is a being who is described and defined by his menace, with little need to be understood as a living and complex

human being subject to external and environmental forces and vulnerable to the mental anguish or depression of his death, imprisonment, and abuse within the present order of American society" (p. 197). Ultimately, much research pertaining to Black boys and men is almost inherently characterized by a focus on Black males as problems, opposed to serving as an examination of the ails that historically and currently plague the Black male body.

Sadly, the "negative ascriptions of Blackness and maleness" Curry (2017) mentions in the above quote are ones that continually transcend space and time, making it virtually impossible for Black boys and men to escape the prescribed and perceived nature of their being. To this point, Brown (2017) asserts,

> From the advent of Modernity to the present, Black males at different points in history were constructed and made into the proverbial Racial Other or non-citizen. Black males have been constituted as the *slave, the sambo,* and *the brute,* and positioned as *endangered* and *in-crisis*. These constructs took form within historically contingent spaces where discourses surfaced about the questionable personhood of Black males. (pp. 108–109)

He continues, "Each of these constructs contains implicit and explicit notions of race, masculinity and citizenship. These constructs also took form within specific historical contexts and produced what Homi Bhabha (1994) calls a *racist stereotypical discourse*" (as cited in Brown, 2017, p. 109). Relatedly, Brown (2017) argues "that the imagery of Black males has always taken form through different systems of thought (e.g., theology, science, and social science) that helped to produce a new racist stereotypical discourse sustained by the racial binary of Whiteness and Blackness" (p. 109). Worth noting here is the assertion that throughout history and across disciplines, the Black male has been *constructed* and *constituted* opposed to being

consulted and considered regarding the formation of his image. And, while the assignment of stereotypes is not unique to the Black male demographic, what is distinctive is the fact that stereotypes (both historically and currently) about Black boys and men have become synonymous with who others believe them to be. Consequently, these widely accepted caricatures lead to a perpetual state of violence and degradation against Black male bodies and their humanity.

To fully conceptualize the deep-seated nature of stereotypes, attitudes, and subsequently, violence against Black males, one must first examine the historical and hegemonic underpinnings on which they are built. Relatedly, Curry (2017) states: "Black men enter our theoretical purview through the stereotypes and anxieties produced within our own time, so the historical milieu from which they actually emerge and in which they live is thought ultimately to be irrelevant to the production of theory. The academic theorist fears the Black males represented in our present day, so it is easy to rationalize these phobias, which interpret Black men as patriarchal, violent, and indifferent to the suffering of others, as method. Making one's phobias a historically salient feature of the world lends objectivity to the subjective, so establishing these stereotypes as antecedents legitimizes Black masculinity as theory rather than as theorists' pathology" (p. 39). Black males have been typecast in a role that is rarely, if ever, reimagined. For, even when theorists make palpable their ponderings of the current condition and placement of the Black male, these notions and ideas are rooted in a historical context that has been conjured up by fear opposed to being the output of thoughts founded on the actualities of Black males' lived experiences. This sentiment brings to mind "Bhabha's notion of *racist stereotypical discourse*," which "provides a useful theoretical lens for examining how Black males have been constituted over time. Bhabha asserts that a *racist stereotypical discourse* is a

discursive strategy that forms knowledge that vacillates between the present and the *same old stories* of racialized subjects. Bhabha defines *same old stories* as past histories and stereotypes that have produced an ideological fixity of otherness about the Black male subject. For Bhabha, when these *same old stories* are situated within a historical moment, they produce new discursive formation of difference" (Brown, 2017, p. 109). When theorists approach the histories of Black male bodies without a level of criticality, they are likely to rely on stories and stereotypes of old. This lack of criticality, this unthought leads to an over-dependance on historical hearsay, which ultimately works to perpetuate, and to some degree make permanent, stereotypes that plague Black boys and men.

Black males do not get the benefit of context. Instead, they are appointed ahistorical generalizations that span generations. "Nuance," Curry (2017) states, "the attention to detail and contextual distinction, is absent from many theoretical accounts of Black gender relations because history is replaced by symbols that come to represent fixed ontological dispositions" (p. 199). More specifically, "Because he is *the Nigger*, possessing only the nature of a savage *thing*, driven almost solely by his animal intuitions and lust for violence, he is said to have not sociological, historical, or economic causes for his behavior. He is only an unyielding victim of his nature. This account of Black manhood is a caricature. It does not represent Black men and boys as reflective and impressionable human beings; it offers thinkers a display of a Black entity that demands no recognition or consideration beyond the fear he inspires or the problems he presents to society" (Curry, 2017, p. 197-198). Lacking from numerous theories that emanate from the existence of Black males is this notion of nuance. Black boys and men are often treated as a monolith opposed to being acknowledged as complex humans whose personhood is constantly challenged—and in many cases disregarded— through sociological, historical,

educational, and economic injustices. This need for distinction is one of the reasons I was compelled by Curry's (2017) shift, as discussed in the previous chapter, from *gender* to *genre* as it relates to the lived experiences of Black males. For Black men, gender is accompanied by connotations and constructs that ascribe a certain privilege to anyone with male genitalia. Shifting to the use of *genre*, however, accounts, not only for the fluidity of Black manhood, but also acknowledges that their reproductive organs do not grant them access to a patriarchal system built and maintained by their white counterparts.

As a Black woman conducting research and creating frameworks related to Black males, it is imperative that I do my due diligence to make space for the actualities of the Black males' lived experiences. Ultimately, I do so by relying on their testimonies through various philosophical and literary works. While I do not expect these accounts to speak for every Black male, I do hope it will provide insight that is counter to the [gendered] narratives that have been generated and regenerated with each passing generation.

Curry on Gender Studies' Shortcomings Surrounding Black Males

Curry (2017) uses his book, *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood*, to detail the history of racialized caricatures and the ways in which they still plague Black men. Moreover, he discusses how these negative views and beliefs about Black men find their way into the academy making for a deficit in theory that serves to center the Black male and his experiences. Instead, we are inundated with philosophies like intersectionality that continue to negate Black males, their histories, and their realities.

> Curry (2017) states, in quoting gender theorist Arthur F. Saint-Aubin,
>
> Even when [B]lack men are the ostensible subjects (they are, in fact, objects) of workshops, special journals, editions, etc., they are still marginalized theoretically and

> compared to a norm by which they are usually judged lacking. Because Black men are not subjects of–or in—theories emanating from their own experience, they are often conceptualized as the threats others fear them to be. (p. 3)

More concretely, even when Black males are given surveys or questionnaires to provide insight into their experiences, specifically those taking place in a school setting, this does not allow them to become the subjects since the questions are often based on assumptions the researcher already holds about Black males. Beyond this example, there is a general lack of theory that places the Black male at the helm of his own narrative. There is, however, an abundance of articulations of the Black male experience through the perspective of philosophies whose tenets can be traced back to the historical marginalization of Black men. The theory Curry (2017) discusses and refutes at length is intersectionality, a concept coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and that finds its home in Black feminism. According to those subscribing to intersectionality theory, "it can be applied to any number of subjects (Black men, Black queer/quare identity, women of color throughout the world, disability, and so on)" (Curry, 2017, p. 208). The issue here is that "The exact disadvantages men of color—specifically, heterosexual Black males—confront seems largely absent in intersectionality theory. Some intersectionality thinkers assert that Black males have privilege and advantages over Black women because they are male; others suggest that while Black men are shown to be the greatest victims of incarceration and police brutality, the attention to their suffering excludes the suffering of Black women, as well as that of Black gay and lesbian groups" (Curry, 2017, pp. 208–209). Furthermore, "For heterosexual Black males, intersectionality insists that both Black male advantage and disadvantage over other groups is male privilege" (Curry, 2017, p. 209). This notion that Black men are somehow privileged due to their maleness is a major misconception of intersectionality. This line of thinking creates another

form of violence against Black male bodies as it forces them to minimize, rather than legitimize, their plight as to give the "appropriate" amount of attention to other disenfranchised groups of people. Curry (2017) continues,

> Intersectionality presumes that the thinker can intuit social dynamics and know the relative position of subjects within society simply through an account of the categories used to describe their biological bodies. In the case of sexual violence such as domestic abuse and rape and even the economic asymmetries between Black males and white men and women (an, in many cases, Black women), there is no awareness of such vulnerability within the intersectional ordering of "Black maleness," since maleness is assumed to connote privilege built into social organizations, institutions, and individual disposition. This allows intersectionality theorists to assert that bodies outside the chosen configuration of privilege are less powerful and disadvantaged, regardless of their actual position in society. (pp. 218–219)

It cannot be left for the thinker to rely on their own intuition or cognition to delineate the hierarchal structure of society. There is a great deal of associative conditioning that has been done due to the said social hierarchy. People have been conditioned to associate power with masculinity and masculinity with maleness. Therefore, Black men are not perceived as being a vulnerable population. Instead, they are misaligned with notions of patriarchy that paint a picture of them as dominant members of their racial community due to the male aspect of their identities. The rub, however, is that it is this assumed dominance that forces the realities of their existence into the shadows of supremacy. Fortunately, theories like intersectionality are not the sole source for discourse around Black males. In fact, scholars Darren Hutchinson (2001) and Athena Mutua (2013) are pioneers of multidimensionality theory, a post-intersectionality theory

that "… aims to complicate 'the very notions of privilege and subordination' deployed by Crenshaw's theory by focusing on the presumed advantages of heterosexuality, homosexuality, and multiple identities" (Curry, 2017, p. 220). Additionally, "Mutua realized that intersectionality demonstrates a resistance toward seeing Black males as gendered and vulnerable and that new terminology was needed to capture the gendered disadvantage of Black maleness's multidimensionality. She concludes, 'What [B]lack men were experiencing was not sexism, a term that over a long history seemed to me to reference the discrimination and oppression of women, but rather, was gendered racism'" (Curry, 2017, p. 221). Both Hutchinson (2001) and Mutua (2013) challenge intersectionality by addressing complexities that characterize oppression (Hutchinson, 2001, p. 295). Multiplicity theories do not seek to create a hierarchy of oppression among various groups. It does, however, aim to highlight the limited vocabulary and the misleading use of term *gender* that is customary to intersectionality theories.

According to Curry (2017) Black manhood is often represented by the caricature of savage or animalistic, and "Despite the language of intersectionality and antiessentialism, and the emphasis on progressivism and pluralization, this caricature is the foundation of various disciplinary theories concerning Black males" (Curry, 2017, p. 198). Additionally, "Black maleness is continually denied consideration as sexually vulnerable and a stigma operating to justify the murder of all Blacks. Despite its societal impact, Black maleness is theorized as Black masculinity and thereby relegated to an isolated function. It is distanced from its empirical consequence in such a way that it can be justifiably rendered insignificant as a field of study in the academy, especially when dealing with the experiences and impositions imposed on the heterosexual Black male body" (Curry, 2017, p. 198). Therefore, similar to Mutua (2013), Curry (2017) found it necessary to create terminology that not only denotes the historicized subjugation

of Black males, but that also augments the current availability of terminology for articulating the realities of Black men in America. To address this identified need, Curry (2017) introduces *Man-Not*. Prior to delving into Curry's (2017) conceptualization of *Man-Not*, it is important to understand the history that inspired it: "The behavior of the colonized and their personalities/ souls were judged as bestial and thus non-gendered, promiscuous, sexual and sinful. The colonized/racialized subject was denied gender precisely to define the boundaries between the content of the human and the deficit of those racially speciated. This is not to say there was no sexual differentiation between bodies and the roles assigned to them. Rather, it highlights that 'colonized people become male and female. Males became not-human-as-not-men and colonized females became not-human-as-not-woman.' The Black man, deprived not only of an identity but also a history and existence that differs from his brute negation, experiences the world as a *Man-Not*" (Curry, 2017, p. 6). Over time, colonized women gained humanity through the development of gender studies and gender theories. While they were still considered racially inferior, their identification as female now placed them in one category with the white female, which was characterized by virtue and innocence. In contrast, maleness placed Black men in a perceived position of power, thus making them appear as oppressors to Black women. On the other hand, they were still not considered human because of the assigned adjective of animalistic, which placed them opposite of white men who were classified as human. Following this historical insight, Curry (2017) provides a detailed explanation of the function of *Man-Not* as a Black Male Studies concept.

> Simply stated, analyzing Black males as the Man-Not is a theoretical formulation that attempts to capture the reality of Black maleness in an anti-Black world. Because it is rooted in the colonial formulation of sex designation, not gender, the Man-Not

> recognized that racial maleness is not coextensive with or synonymous to the formulations of masculinity, or patriarchy, offered by white reality. The Man-Not is the denial not only of Black manhood but also of the possibility to be anything but animal, the savage beast, outside the civilizational accounts of gender. To suggest that Black males are, in fact, gendered patriarchs is an erasure of the actual facts of anti-Black existence and a substitution of the white anthropological template at the core of negating Black (male) existence as it ends. (Curry, 2017, p. 7)
>
> *The Man-Not* was thought of as a corrective of sorts, as a concept of Black males that could challenge the historical and theoretical accounts of Black men and boys that have proliferated throughout disciplines and are taken as gospel in academic research. This book is the first philosophical exploration of the oppression of the Black male that aims to synthesized the multiple findings and research concerning his condition across disciplines. (Curry, 2017, p. 9)

This quote presents a level of historical and theoretical nuance that I believe is seldom (if ever) employed when discussing Black male bodies. There is Black *manhood,* and what I am going to refer to as Black *malehood*. *Manhood*, which is rejected by Curry's (2017) Man-Not theory is rooted in civilized accounts of gender, meaning then Black men are considered "not human" in comparison to white men. *Malehood,* however, denotes sex assignment. When we consider Black *malehood* opposed to Black *manhood,* we acknowledge that sex designation does not make Black men a part of the same patriarchal system of hierarchy as their white counterparts.

Curry (2017) recognized a significant gap in much of what is researched and written about Black males. Many theorists, specifically those whose philosophies align with intersectionality, dismiss the historical context of the Black male. They conceptualize Black men

based on frameworks of gender that were birthed from white supremacist ideologies. Curry's (2017) theory centers the Black male as the subject of his own (counter)narrative and serves to humanize him, as these are both aspects missing in a deal of discourse around Black males and their lived experiences. The Man-Not serves to eliminate the absence of scholarship that deals exclusively with the Black male experience as the historical and sociological hardship that it is. In fact, "Gender theorists are never asked to imagine the conditions that determine choice, or their lack thereof. Regardless of the social phenomenon one attends, theory asserts that Black men's higher rates of homicide, domestic abuse, and crime and even their political attitudes are the consequence of their obsession over their lack of power and patriarchy. This answer, which relies on essentialist and biological notions of maleness thought to have been rejected decades ago, remains unchallenged in its contemporary iterations. In our present moment, these essentialist identity accounts of social phenomena remain safe behind theoretical labels thought to disown the dangers of such categorical mistakes. Stated differently, because poststructuralism and intersectionality are thought to be, and are popularized as, antiessentialist paradigms, there has been a reluctance to identify essentialist notions that are still operating within these theories" (Curry, 2017, p. 199-200). Curry (2017) counters this class of theories—specifically intersectionality—with the introduction of his original theory: *Man-Not*. Prior to his development of said theory, there has been a perpetual lag in research that provides this level of detail to disaggregating the histories and social circumstances that have been used to detrimentally define and discuss Black men. In fact, Curry (2017) states, "In my discipline of philosophy, one text has yet to be written that specifically analyzes the life and experience of Black men and boys in America" (p. 229). This section's brief examination of the academy's theory deficiency

alongside Curry's (2017) detailing of the *Man-Not* exposes a gap in current work around Black males and encourages scholars like me to create innovative ways to address this gap.

Genre Studies: From Concrete to Conceptual

I have always had an appreciation for the written word. As an English major, I fostered my love of language, and as an English teacher I strived to help my students gain the same affinity for literature. Through these experiences, I also gained a more nuanced understanding of concepts like genre. Previously I discussed Curry's (2017) use of genre in relation to Black male bodies. Here, however, I discuss genre within its original context of bodies of literature. I use this section to briefly survey several aspects of genre and genre theory— as examined and written by John Frow (2015)—as they are integral to my development of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre, a concept I detail in the following chapter.

The aim of this section is not to provide detailed insight into all aspects of genre/genre theory, for John Frow (2015) has already undertaken that task. As such, I use Frow's (2015) work on genre and genre theory to inform the decisions I made regarding the refinement of my original concept of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre. Frow (2015) states:

> Genre, we might say, is a set of conventional and highly organised constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning. In using the word 'constraining' I don't mean to say that genre is simply a restriction. Rather, its structuring effects are productive of meaning; they shape and guide, in the way that a builders' form gives shape to a pour of concrete, or a sculptor's mould shapes and gives structure to materials. Generic structures both enables and restricts meaning, and is a basic condition for meaning to take place. I take it that genre theory is, or should, be about the ways in which different structures of meaning and truth are produced in and by the various kinds of writing, talking, painting,

> filming, and acting by which the universe of discourse is structured. That is why genre matters: it is central to human meaning-making and to the social struggle over meaning. (p. 10)

Key to Frow's (2015) assertion is that genre is not simply about physical structuring of a text, but is a matter of what meaning this structure helps create. A key point of emphasis for Curry (2017) is the historical and sociological dehumanization of the Black males. If what Frow (2015) says is true, and genre "is central to human meaning-making and to the social struggle over meaning," then it is my hope that Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre can serve as one way to combat "the historical and sociological dehumanization of the Black males." The Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework aims to help readers make meaning from Black males' lived experiences—as presented by Black males—while creating a space in which readers are urged to interrogate social constructs and internalized beliefs around Black manhood. Also, in alignment with Frow (2015), Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre is meant to enable as well as restrict meaning (p. 10). This is important because by engaging Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a genre, readers are given parameters (signposts for analysis) that encourage the meaning-making process while restricting textual analysis that further objectifies the Black male character/speaker. By having boundaries within which they must remain, the reader is hopefully less likely to make meaning that aligns with familiar, yet false, historical and social caricatures of Black boys and men.

A major component of literary genre theory is genre systems. According to Frow (2015), "Genre systems form a shifting hierarchy, made up of tensions between 'higher' and 'lower' genres, a constant alternation of the dominant form and a constant renewal of genres through processes of specialization or recombination" (p. 77). This hierarchy of genres can be likened to

the social hierarchy that has been constructed around the category of race; just as there are dominant and subordinate bodies of literature, there has also been an establishment of a dominant (white) and subjugated (Black)[7] bodies within society. Acknowledging Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a genre means participating in the "alternation of dominant form and a constant renewal of genres through processes of specialization or recombination" (p. 77). It adheres to the action of alternating due to its de-centering whiteness (dominant society) and its centering Black manhood. I understand that genre is not traditionally taught as a racialized concept; however, I assert that in a world where it determines social order, race is inherently present in concepts like genre. To this point, Frow (2015) says, "Knowledge about genre and genres is deeply embedded in everyday life, in social practices, and in commercial and educational institutions," (p. 31). With this in mind, I developed Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre to provide a framework for analysis of literary texts that draw on the lived experiences of Black male characters/speakers. This level of specificity is imperative in that it helps to shift how the reader engages these texts, thus hopefully rendering a reading and an analysis that challenges hegemonic ideals.

As stated earlier, another characteristic of genre systems is the "constant renewal of genres through processes of specialisation or recombination" (Frow, 2015, p. 77). Genres are regenerative, meaning the generating of a new literary category does not mean disposing of the characteristics offered by preceding genres. Instead, the idea is to use what has already been provided as a framework or a model for the newly specialized genre. For example, Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a genre includes the literary technique *stream of consciousness*. In

[7] While Black is not the only race that is acknowledged as marginalized in relation to whiteness, I use it as the marker of subjugation here due to my emphasis on Black male bodies throughout the project.

traditional genres stream of consciousness is characterized by a continuous flow of thoughts. Even if disruptive events are taking place, they do not interrupt the character. With BMC, however, stream of consciousness requires a disruption that causes a significant interruption to the thought and existence of the Black male character/speaker; additionally, it is important for the reader to experience this disruption alongside the character/speaker for meaning-making purposes.

Literary genres are about expression. Poetry, narratives, dramas are all considered expressive modalities; however, they each serve greater purposes of study. Within the scope of literary genres is a wide range of formal, rhetorical, and thematic considerations the reader must attend to make meaning of a text.

Table 5. Genre and Structural Considerations

Structural Dimensions	Considerations
Formal Organization (Frow, 2015, p. 81)	• shaping the material medium in which the genre works • 'immaterial' categories of time, space, and enunciative position • organization of language properties • properties of grammar and syntax
Rhetorical Structure (Frow 2015, p. 82)	• textual relations between senders and receivers of messages are organized in a structured situation of address • credibility, authority, and emotional tones result from rhetorical relations and formal expression in the syntactic and intonational nuances of discourse
Thematic Content (Frow, 2015, p. 83)	• the shaped human experience that the genre invests with significance and interest • recurrent topics of discourse

The idea is not that all works classified as a certain genre employ each of these structures at the same ratio or even in the same exact manner, but it is an expectation that they are each present. In fact, Frow (2015) states, "This is merely to say that different genres give a different

weight to the formal, rhetorical, or thematic dimensions of their structure, and have a characteristic configuration in each of the three areas. But it is nevertheless central to my definition of genre that each of these three dimensions has a constitutive role, and that there is no genre whose properties are not codified in each of them" (p. 84). Works I later discuss as entries into Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre each rely on these three dimensions to convey the lived experiences of select Black male characters/speakers. Also important to note is that each of the considerations charted above are key in the signposts for analysis I present in relation to this newly defined genre of Black Male Consciousness (BMC).

Classification of literature helps provide the reader with the necessary context for interpreting a text. The genre of a text determines the approach. When the reader is aware of the organization, structure, and content of the text, their interaction with said text is more likely to yield an analysis centered less on biased ideals they have internalized and more around the framework of analysis that accompanies the genre in use. Frow (2015) maintains three major points pertaining to the interpretation of genres:

1. Genre analysis is not about classification but about interpretation and use. Assigning a text to a particular genre is a step in deciding how to interpret it.
2. Genre is not a property of a text but a framework that we impute to it; but this imputation is neither arbitrary nor idiosyncratic, since the conventions of a genre are shared by members of a discourse community.
3. Genres define a set of expectations that guide our engagement with texts; these expectations are structured as cues which frame a text in particular ways and which may take a particular material form. (p. 133)

These key ideas reinforce my decision to not only create a new class of literature, a new genre, but also my provision of a set of signposts for analysis to accompany it. It is not enough to simply proclaim that a group of texts are now categorized as Black Male Consciousness (BMC). When lacking a framework for evaluating texts, genres are left open to interpretive mayhem. Genres are specific and require specialized interpretation. Specific to Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as a genre, flexible interpretation would not help guide readers to in the intended direction. This genre requires that the reader remain attentive to the certain aspects of language, structure, and voice as not to further objectify Black male bodies, but rather account for and make relevant their histories.

Conclusion

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre strives to shift from current instructional practices and introduce a framework for literary analysis that considers the distinctive historical context of Black males by moving away from assumptions and toward the historical actualities of Black males. Without concepts like Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and its signposts for analysis, students will not only engage literature in antiquated and biased ways but may ultimately interact with Black male bodies in manners that continue to subjugate them. Additionally, newly defined frameworks like Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre give students new and innovative ways, not ways that present an illusion of newness, to cultivate a level of criticality that will hopefully extend beyond the classroom.

CHAPTER IV: RECONTEXTUALIZING LITERARY RENDERINGS IN THE CLASSROOM SPACE: DE-GENDERINIG BLACK MALE BODIES THROUGH A GENRE OF BLACK MALEHOOD

De-gendering Black male bodies through literature occurs when we interact with the literary works in ways that account for what Curry (2017) calls "racial maleness," which "is not coextensive with or synonymous to the formulations of masculinity, or patriarchy, offered by white reality" (p. 7). Left unexamined, a gendered view of Black men and boys is dangerous to the way they are perceived in literature and ultimately received in the world. Oftentimes secondary students are exposed to works that portray Black male figures as abusive, predatory, and/or hyper-sexual; these caricatures result from a notion that Black males are "gendered patriarchs" (Curry, 2017, p. 7) who aspire for "power over others" (Curry, 2017, p. 205). I developed Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre, along with four accompanying signposts for analyzing this newly defined body of literature, to help teachers and students move toward degendered interpretations of Black male literary bodies. In this chapter, I discuss my original concept— Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the four signposts for analysis— as well as model their potential use. Based on themes found across the foundational and literary works that contributed to my framework for analysis, I have defined Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre as the following: a category of literature characterized by a subjective nature of narrating a journey of consciousness as experienced by Black male bodies. Subsequently, I developed the signposts—double consciousness, stream of consciousness, caricatures, and dominant/counter narratives—as guardrails to help guide readers away from interpretations that can cause more harm than good to Black men and boys and toward an analysis that acknowledges the humanity of Black male bodies. As such, each signpost requires that readers

both acknowledge and interrogate current messages and beliefs regarding Black men and boys in order to address and intercept said messages/beliefs. Through the work of this chapter, I found that while Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the aforementioned signposts are needed contributions to a current landscape of literary analysis that perpetuates deficit thinking about Black male bodies, what is needed most is opportunities for teachers to (re)engage a level of criticality that (re)considers how their current instructional practices disregard the nuanced nature of Black males' lived experiences in literature and in life. One of the most powerful steps in my research process was applying Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts to different literary works written by and about Black male authors. While I was already aware that this is not a natural lens through which teachers read and discuss literature (specifically works of literature written by and about Black male authors), engaging the framework confirmed a need for ongoing professional development and instructional support that broadens and refines English teachers' approaches to literary analysis through guided practice and continual feedback.

Secondary English teachers often express to me their concerns regarding the Eurocentric nature of the literary canon in which they are expected to engage students. I currently serve as an Educational Consultant for grades 6-12 English, and in this role, I have had numerous conversations with middle and high school English teachers about how they could possibly address this issue. Almost instantly, each teacher suggests providing supplemental texts that offer varied cultural perspectives but are also within the scope of the provided curriculum. Once upon a time, this would have been my suggestion as well. However, as I have gained more nuanced insight through my research, I now understand that this solution presents an issue: Texts available in required curricula often perpetuate the marginalization of Black bodies; however,

this does not rest solely within the texts. Common instructional practices like close reading and annotating, when employed without the specific context of Black males' lived experiences, can often perpetuate the marginalization of Black men and boys, for even when teachers provide students with supplemental (culturally relevant/inclusive) texts, students are still expected to use standard practices like close reading and annotating to make meaning. They are not given new or alternate ways to help them navigate the text with criticality. They are rarely, if ever, given prompts that require them to consider how the experiences of racialized bodies (more specific to my work, Black male bodies) shape one's analysis of the literary piece. Furthermore, students are rarely, if ever, given opportunities to discuss how their interpretations of presented racialized experiences impact the ways in which they encounter and engage racialized bodies. Picture it, almost any North American ninth grade English classroom. The year, 2022 (or any year rather because sadly not much has changed; however, that is for a different day and a different dissertation). Students are reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They have been provided reading guides that call their attention to major/minor characters, plot events, potential themes, etc. They articulate responses to questions that focus on Scout (white female) and her relentless pursuit of justice for wrongly accused Tom Robinson (Black male), and the racial tensions present in the novel are relegated to serving merely as a backdrop for Scout's "heroism" against racism. Tom Robinson, then, becomes an object of discussion in the story of Scout opposed to being the subject of a narrative that attends to the nuances of his lived experiences as a Black man (specifically, a Black man in the racist South during the Great Depression). Yes, this novel is written from Scout's point of view; however, that does not mean interpretations can and should only be limited to her perspective. Now, picture it, my ideal ninth grade English classroom. The year is 2023, and students are reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They are conducting a first read of

an assigned set of pages and are annotating (making a note, posing a question, etc.) anything that explicitly or implicitly pertains Tom Robinson. They discuss their initial thoughts with their group members. Then each group is assigned a signpost for analysis (double consciousness, stream of consciousness, caricatures, dominant/counter narratives). Within their groups they conduct a second reading of an assigned set of pages, during which time students annotate and discuss places where their assigned signpost applies. The class reconvenes as a whole group, and students share their annotations and thoughts about the text through the lens of each signpost. Students then work independently to write a comparison of their annotations and analysis before and after their introduction to the signposts. This reflection can be powerful for teachers and students, as it can open the door for a larger discussion about how, just like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the lived experiences of Black men and boys are often narrated by voices that are not their own. And, while I would not consider this novel a part of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre, the signposts for analysis (double consciousness, stream of consciousness, caricatures, dominant/counter narratives) can serve to engage students in a reading, and subsequently an analysis, that considers the full humanity of Tom Robinson, the Black male body who is traditionally used to propel Scout to some moral high ground. Please note, this is not an indictment on instructional practices like close reading, annotating, etc. In fact, these are practices I support. Rather this is an acknowledgement that on their own, these practices do not attend to the nuances of Black males' lived experiences. As such, my work around theorizing Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre provides a potential roadmap for reading texts about Black males through a lens specific to centering their lived experiences and to challenging common portrayals of Black men and boys in both literature and life.

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the accompanying signposts for analysis represent philosophical and pedagogical shifts that explore what Callejo Perez et al. (2014) refer to as those "grey spaces where individuals can address concepts of social justice and equity" (p. 51). Additionally, Smits and Naqvi (2015) edit an extensive collection of works dedicated to *framing peace*, language that is partially credited to Butler (2009) who introduces "frames." As interpreted by Smits and Naqvi (2015), "we may think of frames as structures of language, cognition, and emotion that allow us to determine meaning and significance and how we accord recognition to others" (p. 5). In this vein I introduce Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts (double consciousness, stream of consciousness, caricatures, and dominant/counter narratives) as *frames* through which readers can engage Black male [literary] bodies in a manner that "addresses concepts of social justice and equity" (Callejo Perez et al., 2014, p. 51) that are specific to the lived experiences of Black men and boys.

Conceptualizing Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre and the Signposts for Analysis

In Chapter II, I discussed various notions of *consciousness* and their contributions to how I have contextualized *consciousness* in relation to Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre. Here, however, I focus more specifically on Fanon (1967, 2008) and Curry (2017) as they succinctly articulate Black male consciousness in ways that align most directly with how I define Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre: a category of literature characterized by a subjective nature of narrating a journey of consciousness as experienced by Black male bodies. Fanon (1967, 2008) and Curry (2017), although years and worlds apart, experience a consciousness specific to their pre-determined markers of race (Black), sex (male), and gender (man). In each instance this consciousness functions deliberately and despite his subjugation. Fanon (1967, 2008) engages Black consciousness with sense of certainty, as he makes plain that he is "not a

potentiality of something" (p. 114), while Curry (2017), with a similar conviction, proclaims "the Black male stands alone in his surety of self" (p. 169). In totality, Fanon (1967, 2008) states, "In terms of consciousness, black consciousness claims to be an absolute density, full of itself, a state pre-existent to any opening, to any abolition of the self by desire" (p. 113). Additionally, "Still regarding consciousness, black consciousness is immanent in itself. I am not a potentiality something. I am fully what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. There's no room for probability inside me. My black consciousness does not claim to be loss. It *is*. It merges with itself" (Fanon, 1967, 2008, p. 114). Fanon discusses explicitly the intrinsic nature of Black consciousness, for it is not a matter of *if* Black consciousness exists, but rather a matter of *when* it will emerge. This is a distinction I hope to convey, with the help of the signposts or analysis, through my work with Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre. Making visible, so to speak, the metacognitive prowess of Black men and boys will ideally foster instructional instances where the vulnerabilities of Black males' gendered bodies are not ignored and where the sources of these inequities are interrogated. Relatedly, Curry (2017) states: "Black men have developed a separate historical consciousness of manhood that is quite distinct from that of (white) masculinity. Instead of facilitating an exclusive cognizance of their own oppression in terms of race, Black males have explained their oppression consistently formulated in terms sensitive to their peculiar sexual oppression—their particular vulnerabilities as Black males who are unemployed, hunted, and discriminated against" (p. 25). Furthermore, "The Black male stands alone in his surety of self. He defines himself for himself against a world that condemns him for being. The existential import of this choice cannot be disregarded, since it is the basis of his social self and his attempts to resist the imposition of society. This social self, this humanity, is denied as possible within the larger society. The at-large consensus of others has predetermined

his fate, so to speak, making him an outcast even among other Blacks. They are all marked men. Sometimes this is acknowledged with the slightest (head) nod, but it is known and shared among them" (Curry, 2017, p. 169). Curry's (2017) assertions illustrate how Black males embody a consciousness, a cognizance, unique to the gendered injustices they experience due to imposed ideologies of hegemonic masculinity (Curry, 2017) and the Black males' assumed proximity to patriarchal power. This consciousness also contributes to how Black males define self. While they are keenly aware of their societal condemnation and collective disposability, they refuse to let this strip them of their personhood within themselves as well as amongst one another.

Framing Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre and the Signposts for Analysis

I use Table 6 to both restate my definition of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre as inspired by the works of Fanon (1967, 2008) and Curry (2017) and to outline the four signposts for analysis: double consciousness, stream of consciousness, caricatures, and dominant/counter narratives. Directly following Table 6, I explain each signpost and its connection to the foundational and/or literary works that aided in its creation. After which, I offer four literary exemplars (Tables 7-10) to model the application of each signpost and how it aims to move readers toward readings that accounts for the injustices encountered by Black male bodies, both literary and living.

Table 6. Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre and Signposts for Analysis Overview

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre (*n.*) a category of literature characterized by a subjective nature of narrating a journey of consciousness as experienced by Black male bodies.		
Signpost	**Function**	**Description**
Stream of Consciousness	serves to ***disrupt*** the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of racial enlightenment or awareness	character or speaker has an event that offers a contrast to his current views of or experiences with Blackness
Double Consciousness	serves to recognize the ***duality*** of Black male bodies	character or speaker details thoughts, experiences, etc. that demonstrate the enactment of double consciousness to obtain a desired outcome (i.e. survival)
Caricature(s)	serves to ***dismantle*** negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies	detailing thoughts, events, or interactions that diverge from deficit views of Black male bodies
Dominant/Counter Narrative(s)	serves to ***decenter*** whiteness by offering counter narratives to dominant ones.	development of themes that explicitly or implicitly counter dominant narratives that surround Black male bodies

Signpost One: Stream of Consciousness

Traditionally, stream of consciousness is characterized by the seamless sharing of a character's/speaker's thoughts or feelings regardless of any environmental disruptions. This can be seen through an author's use of monologues or soliloquies, which allow for an uninterrupted look in the thoughts and/or feelings of the character/speaker. As it relates to Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre, however, this disruption is key, for it does not represent some cursory event that may or may not influence the trajectory of the narrative. Instead, this disruption causes a racial awakening of sorts that impacts not only the character/speaker but also

affects the meaning-making process for the reader. This signpost is inspired heavily by the work of Franz Fanon (1967, 2008), specifically *Black Skin, White Masks*. As discussed in Chapter II, Fanon is Antillean, a colonized people who do not characterize themselves as Black, for the Black persons they read of and learn about are considered savages, not civilized like them. In fact, it was not until adulthood, that Fanon (1967, 2008) travels to France and is forced to acknowledge his "racial schema" (p. 92). It is a young white boy's hurling of the word "Negro" directly at him, that led to the disruption of all he has ever associated with his colonized existence. He is now thrust into a world that views him in the same manner he has viewed other Black bodies: as figures that are to be hated, feared, subjugated, and killed (Fanon, 1967, 2008, p.97-98; Curry, 2017, p. 129). While in chapter five of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1967, 2008) discusses the immanency of Black consciousness, in chapter six he also acknowledges how its intentionality of use can be the result of the Black male's placement in a space other than home (p. 122). He elaborates: "The black man realizes that many of the assertions he had adopted regarding the subjective attitude of the white man are unreal. He begins his real apprenticeship. And reality proves extremely tough. But, it will be argued, you are merely describing a universal phenomenon, since the criterion for masculinity is precisely how it adapts to society. Our answer is that such a remark is out of place, for we have just demonstrated that the black man has to confront a myth—a deep-rooted myth. The black man is unaware of it as long as he lives among his own people; but at the first white gaze, he feels the weight of his melanin" (Fanon, 1976 and 2008, p.128). While I have ultimately selected this quote to demonstrate how it inspired my development of the *stream of consciousness* signpost, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge its connection to Curry's (2017) claim that *genre*—not *gender*—more accurately accounts for realities of Black manhood (p. 9, 105, 231). This connection is seen

in Fanon's (1967, 2008) acknowledgement of pushback one might receive as he becomes more assertive regarding how Black men experience the world. He argues that while masculinity is an adaptation of whatever society deems it to be, this does not apply to Black men who have to first and foremost confront the captivity that is their color. As it relates to the *stream of consciousness* signpost, Fanon's (1967, 2008) assertion that it is "under the white gaze, he feels the weight of this melanin" (p. 128) that accounts for the function—serves to ***disrupt*** the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of racial enlightenment or awareness— and the description—the character or speaker has an event that offers a contrast to his current views of or experiences with Blackness—of the *stream of consciousness* signpost. For the consideration of the white gaze, which may not have been considered before, serves as an interruptive event and moment of realization for the Black man he discusses.

Signpost Two: Double Consciousness

"*Double-consciousness* is a concept in social philosophy referring, originally, to a source of inward "twoness" putatively experienced by African-Americans because of their racialized oppression and devaluation in a white-dominated society" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014). Double consciousness does not represent a sort of split consciousness. Instead, it indicates one's dual understanding of self and self in relation to the other, a duality that can often occur simultaneously in a single moment. Dubois (1897, 2004, 2016) asserts, "One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (p. 45). There is nuance in the dualism of double consciousness that readers may overlook if they are not provided a lens through which they can potentially detect said duality and the role it plays in the survival of racialized bodies, specifically Black boys and men.

Additionally, without attention to the duality that characterizes double consciousness, a reader could think of stream of consciousness and double consciousness as interchangeable; however, they differ in that double consciousness does not require a disruption as it can be considered more innate and inherent even if an individual is presumed to lack the language to articulate its use. Along these lines, Curry (2017) quotes: "Overdetermined by the essentialism tying the biological marker of male to that which is patriarchal, current theories of gender assert that Black males exist in a world of false consciousness that obstructs their ability to understand their position within patriarchal structures. Robbed of their historical vulnerability to rape, castration, and death due to 'the mark of maleness,' Black male figures are judged not by the rigor and depth of their understandings concerning patriarchy but by the extent to which they mirror the scholarly interpretation of the women in their day" (p. 41). While the purpose of this signpost—or the framework as a whole—is not to produce new theories about Black men and boys, it is meant to provide readers with a lens through which they can render textual interpretations that acknowledge and account for Black males' rigorous understanding of and astute operation within a patriarchal system that weaponizes against him the very maleness it has assigned to his person. One way of doing this work is for readers to recognize places in the text where the Black male character and/or narrator engages internal dialogue or conflict that demonstrates an awareness of how he may be perceived, specifically by the white other, and it is through this metacognitive process and consideration of potential dangers that his actions are determined.

Signpost Three: Caricature(s)

Historically, Black men have been stereotyped as lazy, inept, violent, sexual deviants, a "foundation from which racist caricatures became revered concepts" (Curry, 2017, p. 1, 198-199). A key aspect of reading texts identified as belonging to the Black Male Consciousness

(BMC) genre is recognizing the ways in which the text serves to dismantle negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies. Like the other signposts, this is not necessarily an explicit action. For example, a Black male character may be seen opening doors and carrying groceries for his elderly, female neighbor. While words like chivalrous and kind may not be used directly, these are characteristics the reader may assign based on the character's actions. This is important for readers, both Black and White[8], who are constantly exposed to messages about Black males that negatively and falsely generalize their racialized bodies. Instead of reinforcing such messages, the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) genre aims to invalidate them. While he discusses theory, opposed to literary works, Curry's (2017) sentiment regarding how Black men are regarded, rings true for the *caricatures* signpost. He asserts, "Black men enter our theoretical purview through the stereotypes and anxieties produced within our own time, so the historical milieu from which they actually emerge and in ways they live is thought ultimately to be irrelevant to the production of theory. The academic theorist fears the Black males represented in our present day, so it is easy to rationalize these phobias, which interpret Black men as patriarchal, violent, and indifferent to the suffering of others, as method. Making one's phobias a historically salient feature in the world lends objectivity to the subjective, so establishing these stereotypes as antecedents legitimizes Black masculinity as theory rather than as theorists' pathology" (p. 39). When introducing the *caricatures* signpost, it is important that we do send the message that the only way to invalidate these caricatures is by presenting Black males who fit into a "socially acceptable" mold of humanity. For example, a character may dress or speak in a manner that does not align with dominant ideals of appropriate expression; however, he is a

[8] While race is not always represented as a binary, here I use Black and white due to the historical context of these racial groups.

businessman who creates employment and educational opportunities within his community. Traditionally lessons on characterization may have students focus on superficial traits of dress and speech; however, the *caricature* signpost encourages students to interrogate their inclination to rely on those stereotypes and rationalized phobias that lead them to overlook or to make secondary those actions counter to caricatures that continue to permeate the world (literary and otherwise).

Signpost Four: Dominant/Counter Narrative(s)

At first glance, this signpost can seem similar to *caricatures*. However, there is a level of nuance that differentiates them. *Caricatures* is more about generalized characteristics that have been assigned to and follow the racialized bodies of Black males. The *Dominant/Counter Narrative(s)* signpost differs because it is more about the development of major themes in the text. The goal of this signpost is that the reader traces the refinement of themes based on the prevalent voice and perspective of the Black male character/speaker opposed to generating thematic connections that are grounded in preconceived notions of Black males that have been imparted on them by dominant society's deficit view of Black male bodies. For example, using through the *caricatures* signpost, a reader may be able to identify specific characteristics or representations that are contrary to those generalizations often made about Black men and boys. Through the *dominant/counter narratives* signpost, the reader may begin with acknowledging and articulating a character's divergence from stereotypes; however, this signpost goes further in that this acknowledgement is a means to making meaning from the text as a whole opposed to making isolated interpretations of a characters' thoughts, actions, and/or experiences. A part of this is understanding the historical narratives in which Black males are theorized and ultimately treated as gendered beings who lack morality and vulnerability. More specifically, "The Black

male is the victim of disciplinary circumstance. Our current orders of knowledge intuitively assert that masculinity remains invulnerable to the gendered violence(s) that appear(s) on first glance to be parasitic to the female body. This ontological assertion holding that sociological phenomena should be recognized as gendered only when women experience them has led to an ahistorical assertion—namely, that certain violence(s) continue to make women vulnerable, but since they are female violence(s), they are not experienced by males. The suffering of the Black male, however, stands in sharp contrast to this analytic calculus often deployed by academics. Because there is no attempt to reconcile his alleged theoretical privilege as a male with is material disadvantage as Black and male in this society, Black maleness is largely determined by the ahistorical synonymousness to white maleness more generally" (Curry, 2017, pp. 105-106). The *dominant/counter narratives* signpost is an attempt at this reconciliation to the extent it can be reached in the secondary English classroom. This context provided by Curry (2017) regarding the de-gendering of Black men and boys is important to readers (re)assessing potential themes that may emanate from ways others historically and currently portray Black males relative to women and to white men.

Conclusion

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts present a possibility for practices in literary analysis that encourage teachers and students to consider the unique experiences of Black male bodies whose susceptibility to domestic and systemic violence is disregarded because of a perceived proximity to power that is associated with his genitalia. (Curry, 2017, pp. 133-134) According to Curry (2017), "Black men need nuanced theories and accounts of their social and existential position instead of analytic statements asserting that power, domination, and privilege are attached to their maleness" (p. 222). And, while the goal of

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the signposts for analysis is not to develop said theories, this framework is intended to support teachers and students as they challenge internalized beliefs that have emanated from philosophies presenting Black men and boys as gendered beings who cannot and do not experience abuse at the hands of family and the law (Curry, 2008, pp. 150-151, 216-217, 223).

Applying the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre Signposts for Literary Analysis

According to Curry (2017), "The history of Black men and boys itself is revised and amended for the coherence of gender within disciplinary thought. These narratives have little to do with the actual character Black men have demonstrated throughout history or the attitudes and values of Black men and boys today" (p. 223). Over the years, I have engaged secondary (grades 6-12) English as a discipline in various capacities: student, teacher, literacy coach, literacy supervisor, and curriculum consultant. Not one of these roles has given way to explicit explorations of thought that consider Black male [literary] bodies outside the socially constructed ideas of who they are and what they represent, specifically as it relates to the gendering of their racialized bodies. As such, I developed each signpost (stream of consciousness, double consciousness, caricatures, and dominant/counter narratives) considering how it can move readers toward an analysis that supports de-gendering Black male bodies. As stated at the start of this chapter, I assert that de-gendering Black male bodies through literature occurs when we interact with the literary works in ways that account for what Curry (2017) calls "racial maleness," which "is not coextensive with or synonymous to the formulations of masculinity, or patriarchy, offered by white reality" (p. 7). More specifically, the *stream of consciousness* signpost is characterized by a disruption and subsequent racial awakening that demonstrates metacognitive prowess on the part of the Black male character/narrator. Metacognition is often

reserved for the mythical Black male intellect who throughout history, literature, and even pop culture is seen as the "articulate" and "well-spoken" exception. Similarly, the *double consciousness* signpost represents a metacognitive state; however, it is more so characterized by its instinctual nature. This distinction is important to note because, as Curry (2017) asserts, "Nuance, the attention to detail and contextual distinction, is absent from many theoretical accounts of Black gender relations because history is replaced by symbols that come to represent fixed ontological dispositions. The historical character of Black men exhibited throughout the centuries is elided for popular mythologies that hold heterosexual Black males to be rapists, Machos, bucks, or criminals" (p. 199). It is with this in mind that I approached the *double consciousness* signpost, as I wanted it to provided readers with a more positive connotative association with the idea of *instinct* in relation to gendered Black [male] bodies who are often depicted as descendants of savages and whose instinctual behaviors reflect as such. This idea of reinforcing positive connotations also aided in my decision to include the *caricatures* signpost, which aims to dismantle negative stereotypes about Black men and boys who, "…cannot continue to exist as caricatures, with their humanity weighed against the mythologies holding them to be rapists, criminals, and aspiring patriarchs who aim to rule both women and society," for "these are not paradigms of analysis; they are racist caricatures that claim theoretical relevance by the extent to which they make the sociological ontological. These caricatures are accepted not because they express some truth about how to understand Black males but because they express *how society insists Black males already are*" (Curry, 2017, pp. 222-223). The *caricatures* signpost requires the reader to take stock of what they have internalized about Black males and to challenge those ideals through interpretations grounded in the actualities and not falsities of the varied lived experiences of Black men and boys. Lastly, the *dominant/counter*

narrative signpost extends beyond traits that are often associated with Black male bodies and requires the reader to think more broadly about messaging they often receive about Black men and boys, messaging that is void context and realities that of Black males' lived experiences. For example, "The historical patterns of Black male victimization and death are often left out of narratives concerning the nature of domestic violence to sustain the almost exclusive focus currently held by gender theorists on women as victims and men as perpetrators." (Curry, 2017, p. 115) When employing the *dominant/counter narrative* signpost, the reader is urged to explore possible themes that account for these contextual omissions characteristic of dominant narratives surrounding Black men and boys, thus making room for readings that account for evidence that is often discounted for personal experience" (Curry, 2017, p. 116).

In the sections that follow, I provide literary exemplars to demonstrate the possible application of each signpost for analysis. Prior to moving into my exemplars, here are few things to note:

1. I selected the texts by Fanon, Baldwin, Coates, and Wright because they are works that can be seen in various levels of secondary English courses (grades 9-12).
2. While there is a wide range of excerpts I could have chosen for each exemplar, I selected those most fitting for the signpost being explicitly modeled. There was not a set criterion for this selection, but the foundational texts, codes, and themes outlined in Chapter II were considered in the selection process.
3. I use one text per signpost; however, this does not signify that only one signpost is present in each text.
4. All signposts do not have to be applicable for the text to be considered part of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre. Conversely, a text does not have to be

considered part of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre for a reader to employ the signposts for analysis.

Along with each excerpt, I briefly discuss how the assigned signpost manifests either explicitly or implicitly in the selected passage. Countless scholars[9] have taken on the task of extensively dissecting the works of the Black male authors I have chosen to uplift: Fanon, Baldwin, Coates, and Wright. As such, the examples I provide, are not an attempt to mirror these bodies of work. As stated previously, teachers continuously express their desire for "practical" and "tangible" practices/takeaways they can implement in their classrooms, so the work below aims to model for high school teachers how they can begin to teach literary analysis in a manner that not only fosters critical thinking, but also a sense of criticality around beliefs about and treatment of Black male bodies. Each chart provides the following: text overview, selected excerpt(s), possible standard interpretation, connection to Curry's (2017) work, and a possible interpretation using the assigned signpost. The "standard" interpretation presents a brief example of how teachers and students often approach text when analyzing text for general use of language, overall theme development, etc. These "standard" interpretations were informed by my various experiences and interactions with student writing samples, classroom discussions, and curriculum design. Subsequently, I composed each exemplar labeled "possible application of signpost" to present one potential demonstration of the signpost in relation to the selected excerpt. I created these through the lens of the secondary teacher, who in planning their daily lessons, may not have the opportunity to engage authors like Curry (2017), but trust that I have presented a model that has already considered such works. Ultimately, students will be encouraged to articulate their own

[9] Gordon et al. (2015), Black (2007), Robles-Ramamurthy (2018), Roberts Forde (2014).

interpretations, but pedagogically, it is the teacher's role to model for students how this may look. Similarly, as a leader in secondary English curriculum and instruction, it is my job to model for teachers how this could manifest in their classrooms. As mentioned in several instances throughout the project, past and current work with secondary English teachers provides me with the insight I have: They prefer to have a model to work from when they are being introduced to new concepts/frameworks for instruction. I found each of these elements important to providing a comprehensive demonstration of the interpretive shifts Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the accompanying signposts are intended to encourage. Naturally, teachers and students may engage in increasingly complex analysis using the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre signposts; therefore, what I offer here is not meant to be the ceiling of literary analysis instruction, writing, and discussion, but the floor upon which richer analysis can be built and articulated.

Table 7. Literary Exemplar 1

Text*:* *Black Skin, White Masks* **Author:** Frantz Fanon **Signpost for Analysis:** stream of consciousness serves to ***disrupt*** the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of racial enlightenment or awareness
Overview of Text: Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952; *Black Skin, White Masks*) is a multidisciplinary analysis of the effect of colonialism on racial consciousness. Integrating psychoanalysis, phenomenology, existentialism, and Negritude theory, Fanon articulated an expansive view of the psychosocial repercussions of colonialism on colonized people (Peterson. 2012). Across the core chapters of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon draws together the existential experience of racialized subjectivity and the calculative logic of colonial rule. For Fanon, and this is critically important, colonialism is a *total project*. It is a project that does not leave any part of the human person and its reality untouched (https://plato.stanford.edu).

Text*:* *Black Skin, White Masks*
Author: Frantz Fanon
Signpost for Analysis: stream of consciousness serves to ***disrupt*** the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of racial enlightenment or awareness

Excerpt(s):

"Beneath the body schema I had created a historical-racial schema. The data I used were provided not by 'remnants of feelings and notions of the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, or visual nature' but by the Other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories. I thought I was being asked to construct a physiological self, to balance space and localize sensations, when all the time they were clamoring for more.
'Look! A Negro!' It was a passing sting. I attempted a smile.
'Look! A Negro!' Absolutely. I was beginning to enjoy myself.
'Look! A Negro!' The circle was gradually getting smaller. I was really enjoying myself.
'*Maman*, Look, a Negro; I'm scared!' Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question" (p. 91).

"I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders …" (p. 92).

"I don't believe it! Whereas I had every reason to vent my hatred and loathing, they were rejecting me? Whereas I was the one they should have begged and implored, I was denied the slightest recognition? I made up in my mind, since it was impossible to rid myself of an *innate complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the Other was reluctant to recognize me, there was only one answer: to make myself known" (p. 95).

Possible Standard Interpretation of Text:

The narrator is engaged in thought about his Blackness and the white gaze, contemplations that were the result of a prior incident on the train. Suddenly his internal dialogue is interrupted by the repetition of the exclamatory "Look! A Negro!" and the outcry "I'm scared! Scared! Scared!" being shouted by a young white boy he encounters in passing. This disruption, this vocalization of fear, can serve to illustrate the severity of racial tensions felt by this Black man traveling away from his [colonized] home. And, while this scene is not presented in the form of a monologue or soliloquy, the author employs stream of consciousness by presenting the narrator's thoughts in the manner they occur, interruptions and all. Through this, the reader gets a firsthand account of the racially charged events experienced by the narrator and how these incidents shape his thoughts, effect his emotions, and influence his actions.

Text*:* *Black Skin, White Masks*
Author: Frantz Fanon
Signpost for Analysis: stream of consciousness serves to ***disrupt*** the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of racial enlightenment or awareness

Curry Context:

The *stream of consciousness* signpost serves to disrupt the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of racial enlightenment or awareness. Instances such as that narrated by Fanon (1967, 2008), are not an indication that he disregards his racial identity, rather it is a demonstration of his [initial] unawareness of the context in which this identity has been assigned. Without the metacognitive disruption caused by the passing white boy, Fanon (1967, 2008) may have continued to intellectualize "the boundary between the abject and the corpse the Black male inhabits" (Curry, 2017, pp. 4-5), opposed to realizing the imposed limits of Black manhood and subsequently mobilizing in a manner that rejects these bookends of disgrace and death. Rejecting this devaluation and dehumanization of his being can be seen in is the Black male's reclamation of generalizations often ascribed to his racialized body. "Because *testeria* emerges from the disjunctive isolation Black maleness has from the normative maleness that is represented as white, the *testeria*, or the cool poser, or the eunuch manifests the repression of the social order corporeally—in the flesh—as Pavlovian peculiarities to stave off death. The death of Black males is meant to prevent *his* reproduction, and impede his ability to reproduce. This is the boundary between the abject and the corpse the Black male inhabits. It is the peculiar genre Black males occupy and the place from which their perspectives emanate" (Curry, 2017, pp. 4-5, 169; Saint Aubin, 1994, p. 1059, 1068-1069). A key idea here is that of *testeria*. Regarding the *stream of consciousness* signpost, and subsequently my analysis of the identified excerpt, I rely on Saint Aubin's (1994) conceptualization of *testeria*. He states, "I want to reserve, provisionally at least, the term 'testeria' for a racial minority masculinity, the experience of the black male body when experience itself is coded and learned as white. I wish to reserve it to refer to inhabiting the untenable space of identification with yet dislocation from the Symbolic Order of the Father. The testerical discourse is the discourse of the other, not female/woman, but male/man other" (Saint Aubin, 1994, p. 1069). This is important to the unfolding of events Fanon (1967, 2008) experiences because until this moment with the young boy in France, Fanon has spent his life in the Antilles where it was in less frequent instances he experienced a sort of uncertainty and discomfort regarding his "corporeal" or "body schema" (Fanon, 1967, 2008, pp. 91–92). And, while he could not necessarily articulate the root cause of this uncertainty before, he always possessed the ever-present "implicit knowledge" (Fanon, 1967 and 2008, p. 92) that he must be mindful of his body and how he presented said body to the world. Fanon (1967, 2008) does not state it explicitly; however, based on his decision to assert himself as a BLACK MAN (p. 95), I believe inherent in this assertion is his realization that he is not just a man, but more specifically he is a Black man, a distinction that makes a vast difference in how he is historically constructed and socially reconstructed by the white other; a distinction that may also account for the doubt and discomfort he sometimes experienced in his homeland when confronted with the white gaze. (Fanon, 1967 and 2008, p. 90) Relatedly, Saint Aubin (1994) in citing Kahane (1985) attests:

Text*:* *Black Skin, White Masks*
Author: Frantz Fanon
Signpost for Analysis: stream of consciousness serves to ***disrupt*** the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of racial enlightenment or awareness

"Testeria and hysteria are homologous first of all then because they both manifest a relationship with the body or pose a specific relationship between the unconscious and the body," so, if what Curry (2017) posits is true, Fanon (1967, 2008) experiences more than a disruption in his train of thought. More significantly, his encounter serves to disrupt the normative ideologies he had internalized regarding his race (and possibly gender).

Possible Application of *Stream of Consciousness* Signpost:

Curry (2017) describes *testeria*, or the "cool poser" as a corporeal repression of a social order (normative maleness) as a Black man's means of survival, a sentiment shared by Saint Aubin (1967) who, in referencing Majors (1985) states: "Cool Pose is a term that represents a variety of attitudes and actions that serve the black man as mechanisms for survival, defense and social competence. These attitudes and actions are performed using characterizations and roles as facades and shields" (p. 1059). The excerpts I selected do not, at first, depict Fanon (1967, 2008) as a cool poser; however, once the weight of the white gaze and his subsequent "objective gaze" (p. 92) lead him to discover his blackness (p. 92), his movements, while still a matter of survival, become less instinctual and more intentional. These excerpts begin with the narrator discussing (internally) his realization that his self-image is rooted in narratives created, disseminated, and perpetuated by the white other. Suddenly, his train of thought is interrupted by the repetitive exclamatory "Look! A Negro!" and subsequent outcry "I'm scared! Scared! Scared!" coming from a young white boy who is passing the Black man on the street. This repetition not only represents a disruption in thought, but it also signifies the moment the narrator recognizes that his [colonized] Blackness, like all Blackness, was a marker of savagery, as constructed and ultimately perceived by the other. And, while the young boy's exclamation "Look! A Negro!" is what initially jolts the narrator from his thoughts, it is the realization that this repeated phrase refers to his Black body that causes an existential emergence. This coupled with the decision to follow the encounter with the narrator's assertion that "*Now* they were *beginning* to be scared of me," demonstrates an intentionality on the part of the author as it further illustrates the disparity between the narrator's initial and eventual understanding of self in relation to Blackness and to the white other. As a result of this disruption and the awakening that resulted, Fanon no longer moves with a sense of [Black] exceptionalism that has been reinforced through social interactions and academic accolades; instead, he now recognizes that in navigating these social and academic spaces, he has been operating in a Pavlovian (Curry, 2017) or instinctual mode of survival against the perils of this Black malehood, and he must now exert intentional physical assertions of self. Curry (2017) touches on this intentional survivability in stating, "The Black man stands alone in his surety of self. He defines himself for himself against a world that condemns him for being. The existential import of this choice cannot be disregarded, since it is the basis of his social self and his attempts to resist the imposition of society" (p. 169). He

Text*:* *Black Skin, White Masks*
Author: Frantz Fanon
Signpost for Analysis: stream of consciousness serves to ***disrupt*** the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of racial enlightenment or awareness

continues, "He lives against the will society has for his death. He invents concepts that sustain him. His anger toward the world generates a place of construction where music, writing, and his very being are positioned against the order of society that continues to breed oppression and empire" (Curry, 2017, p. 169). Without a disruption, not only in thought, but in his being, Fanon (1967, 2008) may not have (or at least not in this moment) experienced a necessary realization, and subsequent articulation, of how his interactions (once instinctual, now intentional) are manifestations of his rejection of normative maleness.

Table 8. Literary Exemplar 2

Text*:* *Native Son*
Author: Richard Wright
Signpost* for Analysis:** double consciousness serves to recognize the ***duality of Black male bodies

Overview of Text:

Native Son, novel by Richard Wright, published in 1940. The novel addresses the issue of white American society's responsibility for the repression of blacks. The plot charts the decline of Bigger Thomas, a young African American imprisoned for two murders—the accidental smothering of his white employer's daughter and the deliberate killing of his girlfriend to silence her. In his cell Thomas confronts his growing sense of injustice and concludes that violence is the only alternative to submission to white society. (Editors of Britannica Encyclopaedia, 2016, para. 1).

Excerpt(s):

"When Jan holds out his hand to shake, Bigger's right hand gripped the steering wheel and he wondered if he ought to shake hands with this white man." (Wright, 1987, p. 66)
Then,
"'First of all,' Jan continued …'"
"'Don't say sir to me. I'll call you Bigger and you'll call me Jan. That's the way it'll be between us. How's that?' … Bigger did not answer … He flushed warm with anger … (Wright, 1967, p. 67)." (Black, 2007, p. 395)

Text*:* *Native Son*
Author: Richard Wright
***Signpost* for Analysis:** double consciousness
serves to recognize the ***duality*** of Black male bodies

"Bigger did not answer. Mary was smiling. Jan still gripped his hand and Bigger held his head at an oblique angle, so that he could, by merely shifting his eyes, look at Jan and then out into the street whenever he did not wish to meet Jan's gaze. He heard Mary laughing softly."

"'It's all right, Bigger'" she said. "'Jan *means* it.'" (Wright, 1987, p. 66)

"Goddamn her soul to hell! Was she laughing at him? Were they making fun of him? What was it that they wanted? Why didn't they leave him alone? He was not bothering them. Yes, anything could happen with people like these. His entire mind and body were painfully concentrated into a single sharp point of attention. He was trying desperately to understand. He felt foolish sitting behind the steering wheel like this and letting a white man hold his hand. What would people passing along the street think? He was very conscious of his black skin and there was in him a prodding conviction that Jan and men like him had made it so that he would be conscious of that black skin. Did not white people despise a black skin?" (Wright, 1987, p. 67).

Possible Standard Interpretation of Text:

Here, the author presents Jan as a white man who exhibits kindness to a Black chauffer by encouraging that the two refer to one another more informally. This suggestion, or insistence rather, of less formal communication causes Bigger pause, but it is Mary's subsequent laughter that fills Bigger with anger, an emotion he cannot display outwardly so the reader is left to learn of his fury through internal dialogue. It is not explicitly stated why Bigger is so outrages by what appears to be innocent amusement on Mary's part; however, based on questions ("Did not white people despise black skin?), word choices (foolish, conscious), and descriptors ("people like these") seen in Bigger's thoughts, the reader can infer that the racial climate and injustices felt by him as a Black man have fostered a general distrust and a sense of insecurity when it comes to whites. Since this is Bigger's first time meeting Jan and Mary appears to treat him warmly, this skepticism can be viewed as unfounded and misplaced. Consequently, his anger can be seen as unpredictable and dangerous.

Curry Context:

While W. E. B. DuBois (1897, 2004, 2016) introduces/defines double consciousness in terms of being both Black and American, Curry (2017) further refines this concept in his discussion about the consciousness of Black men: "The biological reduction of Black masculinity to its sexual assignment of 'male,' largely built on the vacating of the historical peculiarity of race and the consciousness Black men have gained through centuries of racist colonial oppression,

Text*:* *Native Son*
Author: Richard Wright
***Signpost* for Analysis:** double consciousness
serves to recognize the ***duality*** of Black male bodies

allows all sorts of evils to be as historically ascribed to aspirations of Black manhood" (Curry, 2017, pp. 26, 71–72). Black men do not only engage double consciousness based on race (Black) and locale (America); in fact, they often experience double consciousness at the intersections of race (Black) and sex(maleness)/gender (manhood). Therefore, if a reader—when engaging texts that center lived experiences of Black men and boys— approaches texts solely through a lens of "sexual assignment" and ascribed gender identity, they may fail to recognize the significance of double consciousness as employed by Black male bodies who navigate the various intersections of their being: race + sex/gender; race + locale; sex and gender + locale. An analysis that rests primarily or entirely on notions of hegemonic masculinity (Curry, 2017, 10-15, 211-217) can reproduce readings that further ascribe perceived evils to assumed aspirations of Black manhood (Curry, 2017, pp. 26, 71–72), thus presenting Black men as "gendered patriarchs" (Curry, 2017, p. 7) who aspire for "power over others" (Curry, 2017, p. 205).

Possible Application of *Double Consciousness* Signpost:

During their first meeting, Jan insists that he and Bigger refer to one another on a first name basis. Bigger is skeptical and is stalled in his response to the directive. Mary finds humor in this interaction and laughs as she aims to convince Bigger that Jan is being sincere. Her laughter infuriates Bigger. His anger is an extension of the insecurity Mary's laughter incites. This is not an insecurity that stems from self-doubt; instead, it is rooted in an uncertainty of what "people like these" expect from him. In this moment, Bigger has to make determinations about what Jan and Mary expect from him as a Black man. When he questions, "What was it that they wanted?" Bigger demonstrates an employment of double consciousness as his actions, or lack thereof, are guided by an inherent duality of being and of thought that he, a Black man, experiences under the white gaze. Furthermore, it seems that Jan may be erroneously viewing his and Bigger's shared maleness as some sort of equalizer. Bigger, however, is fully aware that his existence as a Black man, a type (genre) of man, means his sex assignment has no bearing on his station in the racial hierarchy that exists between him and Jan. This awareness can be inferred by the lines, "He was very conscious of his black skin and there was in him a prodding conviction that Jan and men like him had made it so that he would be conscious of that Black skin" (Wright, 1987, p. 67). When Bigger makes mention of "Jan and men like him," it can be seen as his acknowledgement of the distinction between Black and white men, a distinction that is important to an understanding of how sexual designation is not an indication of patriarchy or power in relation to Black male bodies (Curry, 2017, pp. 135–136).

Table 9. Literary Exemplar 3

Text*:* *The Fire Next Time*
Author: James Baldwin
***Signpost* for Analysis:** caricatures
serves to ***dismantle*** negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies

Overview of Text:

James Baldwin's well-received 1963 volume The Fire Next Time consists of two essays. The first, "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation," was written on the occasion of the fourteenth birthday of Baldwin's nephew James, who was named after him. The second essay, "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind," recounts Baldwin's experiences growing up in New York, including his unpleasant encounters with the police, his attraction to and rejection of Christianity, his awareness of sexual pitfalls in Harlem, and his later encounter with the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. Filling in the backdrop for these specific comments is Baldwin's ever-spirited indictment of an America in which inequities between the races continue to define people's futures. Recognizing that politics are endemic to life, Baldwin uses the volume for his own political commentary, and that commentary serves to underscore the thoroughly engaging personal and social incidents he relates (https://www.oxfordreference.com).

Excerpt(s):

"I knew how to work on a congregation until the last dime was surrendered—it was not very hard to do—and I knew where the money for 'the Lord's work' went. I knew though I did not wish to know it, that I had no respect for the people with who I worked. I could not have said it then, but I also knew that if I continued I would soon have no respect for myself" (p. 38).

"I was even lonelier and more vulnerable than I had been before. And the blood of the Lamb had not cleansed me in any way whatever. I was just as black as I had been the day that I was born" (pp. 38-39).

Possible Standard Interpretation of Text:

The narrator discusses how in his younger years he worked from the pulpit to compel his fellow church members to part with their money in support of "the Lord's work." He admits, however, he encouraged excessive monetary contributions from the congregation although he knew the money was being used to maintain the immoral lifestyles of various church leaders. Contrastingly, he confesses to feelings of regret and disappointment coupled with a sense of loneliness and vulnerability. While this may not have been the intended outcome, the author's

Text*:* *The Fire Next Time*
Author: James Baldwin
***Signpost* for Analysis:** caricatures
serves to ***dismantle*** negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies

choice to give the reader access to this internal conflict can serve to create doubt and distrust for the reader leaving them to question the reliability of a narrator who chooses duplicity over morality. It can also read as an attempt to solicit compassion for the narrator. It is not uncommon for individuals to battle moral dilemmas, and the author may be using this to foster personal connections between the reader and the narrator to elicit empathy.

Curry Context:

Historically, Black masculinity has often been characterized by a striving toward white masculinity though violence, rape, and overall savagery. "Black men are thought to be latent rapists—the Black macho of old—violent patriarchs, a privileged Black male, craving the moment he is allowed to achieve the masculinity of whites. These mythologies, of decades long gone, remain the morality of disciplines and the political foundation from which racist caricatures become revered concepts" (Curry, 2017, p. 1, 39). When these notions of Black manhood go unchecked, they morph and shift with the times, making caricatures of Black men "revered concepts" (Curry, 2017, pp. 1, 141). that "remain the morality of disciplines …" (p. 1, 41). In fact, "Gender theories asserting that masculinity is synonymous with patriarchy obfuscate attempts to theoretically engage Black manhood and boyhood as it exists in the world, outside the presumed relation of white gender(ed) domination and racism. Despite poststructural and intersectional gender theories that claim to recognize the difference between Black men and boys' material actualities and (white) patriarchy, Black men boys remain confined to biological fixations that make their sexual designation synonymous with their gendered aspirations for power over others. We have arrived at a time of theory in which Black males are thought to be privileged even as they are the overwhelming victims of various systems and bodies in society" (Curry, 2017, p. 205). Similar to the theory Curry (2017) critiques, I have also found that secondary English as a discipline, continues to most often center literature that presents Black men and boys as victimizers opposed to victims. "This discursive production and reproduction of Black masculinity legitimized under the guise of theoretical innovation within and across disciplines still hold to the racial stereotypes that flourish throughout society. The view that Black males are aggressive, dangerous to women, and prone to violence is the same one that police, courts, and vigilantes use to excuse the violence leveraged against these disposable entities—to keep them in their place" (Curry, 2017, p. 206).

Possible Application of *Caricatures* Signpost:

"In a society consumed by its hatred for Black men, there is no resistance to the negation of the Black male's humanity. He possesses no character that stands apart from the imposition of

Text*:* *The Fire Next Time*
Author: James Baldwin
***Signpost* for Analysis:** caricatures
serves to ***dismantle*** negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies

the ideas others thrust on him. Black men and boys are literally perceived as the dangers and fears that others project on them. Unbelievably, this general anxiety felt toward the Black males is suggested to be at the core of his being. Regardless of whether these fears are perceptibility. Fear distinguishes the Black male body from other, less terrifying bodies. Consequently, the Black male is known by the potential he has to be a rapist, a murderer, or a thief" (Curry, 2017, p. 169). As a young man, the narrator worked from the pulpit to convince congregation members to give excessively under the guise of doing "the Lord's work" although he knew the money was used to fund the depraved and hypocritical habits of the church's head ministerial staff. He discusses how his knowledge of the truth caused a lack of respect for his colleagues and an eventual disrespect for himself. The author's choice to give the reader insight into the narrator's internal conflict serves as a counter to common caricatures (e.g., savage, violent, lazy, hyper-sexual, etc.) often associated with Black men and boys. Allowing the reader to see the inner turmoil faced by a young Baldwin illustrates a direct contradiction to the notion that Black males lack morality. Additionally, the narrator articulates having feelings of loneliness and vulnerability along with an uncleanliness he associates with a blackness that even "the blood of the Lamb" could not cleanse. Specifically, he states, "I was just as black as I had been the day that I was born." His reference to blackness here suggests a certain inherent unholiness the world often assigns to and associates with his Black skin (Curry, 2017, pp. 169, 198-199). Additionally, this use of imagery on the part of the author encourages the reader to interrogate religious practices and Biblical interpretations they may have encountered that mark Black men as beasts and that foster an internalized inferiority that may be interpreted from the author's feelings of uncleanliness.

Table 10. Literary Exemplar 4

Text*:* *Between the World and Me*
Author: Ta-Nehisi Coates
***Signpost* for Analysis:** dominant/counter narrative(s)
serves to ***decenter*** Whiteness by offering counter narratives to dominant ones

Overview of Text:

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the

Text*:* *Between the World and Me*
Author: Ta-Nehisi Coates
***Signpost* for Analysis:** dominant/counter narrative(s)
serves to ***decenter*** Whiteness by offering counter narratives to dominant ones

bodies of black women and men—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation, and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden? Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children's lives were taken as American plunder (Coates, 2015).

Excerpt(s):

"I felt the fear in the visits to my Nana's home in Philadelphia. You never knew her. I barely knew her, but what I remember is her hard manner, her rough voice. And I knew that my father's father was dead and that my uncle Oscar was dead and that my uncle David was dead and that each of these instances was unnatural. And I saw it in my own father, who loves you, who counsels you, who slipped me money to care for you. My father was so very afraid. I felt it in the sting of his black leather belt, which he applied with more anxiety than anger, my father who beat me as if someone might steal me away, because that is exactly what was happening all around us" (pp. 15-16).

Possible Standard Interpretation of Text:

In this letter addressed to his son, Coates lists fatalities faced by the Black men in his immediate family. He uses the term "unnatural" to describe their deaths. His word choice here can not only be viewed as vague but can also be read as an attempt to conceal incriminating circumstances surrounding the deaths of his grandfather and uncles, circumstances that may reveal detrimental choices on their part. Coates goes on to describe the gentle way his father cares for his grandson, followed by a recollection of the heavy hand (literally) with which his father disciplined him. He admits his father's use of corporal punishment was fueled by a sense of fear and anxiety that "… someone might steal me away, because that is exactly what was happening all around us." It is not explicitly stated what is meant by "steal me away"; however, combined with the unexplained, "unnatural" deaths of Black male family members, it can be inferred Coates' father feared his son might begin (or had already begun) to engage in the same behaviors that led to said deaths. The author's choice to describe this aspect of his relationship with his father demonstrates an unhealthy dynamic in which the "abused" makes excuses for an "abuser" who he believes lacks the emotional awareness and maturity to express himself in ways outside of violence.

Text*:* *Between the World and Me*
Author: Ta-Nehisi Coates
***Signpost* for Analysis:** dominant/counter narrative(s)
serves to ***decenter*** Whiteness by offering counter narratives to dominant ones

Curry Context:

In relation to the *dominant/counter narrative(s)* signpost, I consider centering whiteness to be literature and/or analytical renderings that perpetuate "racist accounts of Black males" that "depict them as lesser males who are lazy, unintelligent, aggressive, and violent toward women and children who abandon their families physically and cannot provide for them economically, while nonetheless requiring coercive legal and extralegal sanctions to control their hyper-masculinity and predatory inclinations" (Curry, 2017, p. 4, 223). When these representations of Black manhood are left unattended, the reader is at risk of accepting dominant narratives as truth, leaving little to no room for considerations of accounts of Black manhood that exists outside the scope of white masculinity and an assumed aspiration toward it (Curry, 2017, pp. 41, 57, 106, 197, 222). Contrastingly, when the *dominant/counter narrative(s)* signpost is employed, the reader is hopefully more likely to acknowledge and articulate themes that explicitly and/or implicitly counter dominant narratives surrounding Black male bodies, and in doing so, will ideally begin to understand the Black male "as the center of history and the conditions that uniquely affect him." Otherwise, "his rape, his death, his poverty, his marginality—the material facts of his existence—will remain negotiated and negated by the overarching ideological interests of those unwilling to accept the actual condition and disadvantage of Black men and boys" (Curry, 2017, p. 222), an unwillingness that can often lead literary analysis that further disregards said disadvantages and perpetuates messages rooted in the misrepresentation of the Black man's sexual designation (Curry, 2017, pp. 227-228).

Possible Application of *Dominant/Counter Narratives* Signpost:

In an extended letter to his son, Coates chronicles the myriad of mortalities of his Black male family members, death he describes as "unnatural." This word choice could be considered as vague and open to a wide range of interpretations; however, in considering dominant/counter narratives about Black men and boys, the reader understands the nuance in this language. Dominant narratives surrounding Black male bodies would more than likely assume his grandfather's and uncles' "unnatural deaths" to be the result of some sort of unsavory character or flawed behavior (Curry, 2017, p. 137). Furthermore, Coates discusses how gentle and caring his father is with his grandson compared to the physical punishment he received as a child. He acknowledges this father experiences fear and anxiety that "… someone might steal me away, because that is exactly what was happening all around us." And, it was this fear/anxiety that led to his father's use of corporeal punishment. Some may say this is indeed an example of the "pathological coping mechanisms fixated on Black males' achieving their manhood at any cost" that Curry (2017, p. 4) discusses. And, while in one sense the actions of

Text*:* *Between the World and Me*
Author: Ta-Nehisi Coates
***Signpost* for Analysis:** dominant/counter narrative(s)
serves to ***decenter*** Whiteness by offering counter narratives to dominant ones

Coates' father may be viewed as a means of coping, I would argue it is not pathological, rather it is methodical (Curry, 2017, p. 169). Additionally, I do not believe his actions to be some pursuit of white masculinity, and while it is not explicitly stated what is meant by "steal me away," this language combined with the "unnatural" deaths that plague his lineage, helps the reader to see this as a story of grief and loss opposed to an account of unrestrained emotion (Curry, 2017, p. 185).

The intent of this section is to provide a model for use of Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and its associated signposts in the secondary (grades 9-12) English classroom. I found the inclusion of exemplars necessary to give insight into the conceptualization and actualization of the genre and signposts. Additionally, a model of application is imperative to the work I plan to do with secondary English teachers. As stated in previous chapters, my interactions with numerous 9-12 English teachers often yield feedback about their desire for "concrete" resources they can incorporate in their classrooms. They often express that they do not need more "theory" but "materials." Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts for analysis are not meant to be "concrete materials," and it does not offer an instructional script. However, I do believe there is a sort of tangibility that teachers and students can appreciate as they begin to navigate these texts in ways they may not have before. As such, the purpose of this section is not to address every instance in which signposts manifest in each text, rather it is to demonstrate how with guidance and intentionality, we can promote spaces where the complexities of Black malehood are no longer invisible under a cloak of hegemonic maleness that serves to make Black men and boys the objects of narratives that have been generated and perpetuated by narrow definitions of white patriarchy and manhood.

Conclusion

A framework for analysis specific to Black male literature is a necessary contribution to the landscape of teaching and learning in the 9-12 English classroom because when students, Black males and otherwise, are asked to make intertextual and/or personal connections to literature, they are at risk of doing so based on internalizations of social norms specific to a designation of male (gender), opposed to making connections that account for the unique experiences specific to Black males (genre). They rely on frames of reference that are likely steeped in historical mischaracterizations of Black men and boys. Relatedly, Smits and Naqvi (2015) explain, "Frames are thus normative, saturated as they are with questions of value, and while experienced as arbitrary, are also enforced whether by explicit rules or forms of subject formation" (p. 8). Smits and Naqvi (2015) further their understanding of *normative frames* through their study of Judith Butler (2009) and are left with "two salient points: all subjects are injurable and normative frames condition what subjects will be recognized as such" (p. 33). "To say that a life is injurable, for instance, or that it can be lost, destroyed, or systematically neglected to the point of death, is to underscore not only the finitude of a life (that death is certain) but also its precariousness (that life requires various social and economic conditions to be met in order to be sustained as a life)" (pp. 13-14). "It follows, then, that certain kinds of bodies will appear more precariously than others, depending on which versions of the body, or of morphology in general, support or underwrite the idea of the human life that is worth protecting, sheltering, living, mourning. These normative frameworks establish in advance what kind of life will be a life worth living, what life will be a life worth preserving, and what life will become worthy of being mourned" (Butler, 2009, p. 53). While Butler (2009), a white woman, gives name to normative frames, Curry's (2017) work gives them nuanced relevancy to an *injurable*

group of persons who are—currently and historically—as Butler (2009) describes, "lost, destroyed, or systematically neglected to the point of death": Black men. Curry (2017) states, "The conditions of violence, their murder at the hands of all people in society, articulate the unbridled inhumanity of the Black male's peculiar oppression" (p. 185). Furthermore, "It is their submergence within the most wretched conditions created for their slow extermination that offers a purview of the ontology deployed against all oppressed groups in modern society. This insight is often disregarded as hopeless, as unjustified pessimism or melancholia about the world, because Black male consciousness of the world is not articulated within the grammar or orders of futural subjects" (Curry, 2017, p. 185). Curry (2017) does not use the specific language of *normative frames*; however, his mention of *peculiar oppressions*, *Black male consciousness*, and *grammar or orders of futural subjects* aligns with the claim that normative frames are saturated with questions of value (Smits & Naqvi, 2015, p. 8). Qualifiers like peculiar and futural are markers of difference that account for the valuing of bodies considered to be the norm and the devaluing of bodies, specifically Black male bodies, that have been forced to operate within the margins of "normativity."

Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the signposts for analysis offers a literary framework that aims to counter normative frames by providing interpretive lens that consider the "peculiar sexual oppression" and "particular vulnerabilities" of Black men and boys. The *stream of consciousness* signpost works to disrupt the flow of thought/action to disclose a moment of racial enlightenment or awareness. As seen in the Fanon's (1967, 2008) excerpt, there is an almost inevitable realization that one does not enter the world free of the presumptions and judgements of the other and that these judgements are inherently indicative of whether they will be, as Curry (2017) states, "hunted and discriminated against" (Curry, 2017, pp. 25, 108-109,

198-199, 217). As outlined earlier, the double consciousness signpost recognizes the duality of Black male bodies. Curry (2017) makes plain that Black men's image of self is not based on a compilation of their lived experiences, rather it is rooted in historical notions of who they are racially and sexually in relation to notions of white masculinity. This leads to the *caricatures* signpost, which is designed to dismantle negative stereotypes and generalizations about Black male bodies. Curry's (2017) use of the "oppression" and "vulnerabilities" in relation to Black male bodies represents an intentional move away from depictions of Black men and boys as lazy, hyper-sexual deviants, toward a more accurate account of their victimization. Lastly, the dominant/counter narrative(s) is meant to decenter whiteness by offering counter narratives to dominant ones. As stated previously, I consider centering whiteness (in relation to Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and related signposts) to be literature and/or analytical renderings that further those "racist accounts of Black males" (Curry, 2017, p. 4, 39, 134-135, 151, 222-223, 231). As teachers and instructional leaders, we have a responsibility to interrupt and interrogate messages that are steeped in supremacist ideologies about the existence, and by extension, the value of Black men and boys. Traditional instruction on literary analysis often promotes one set of cultural and social norms over others. Even when a text is written by and/or centers a black male, analysis is often shaped by Eurocentric concepts of language and historicized caricatures of Black men, thus rendering a reading of the text that disregards the Black males' (genre) lived experiences and replaces it with a dominant narrative (gender). This is dangerous because readings set against the landscape of whiteness, oftentimes create scenarios in which Black male (literary) bodies are deemed deviants. When this impression is left unattended, it manifests in the continued gendering of Black men and boys, thus failing to account for the multiplicity of masculinities (genre) Black male bodies have been and continue to

be denied. As such, Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the signposts for analysis encourages readers (both teachers and students) to interrogate their current beliefs about Black male bodies, investigate the source of said beliefs, and identify the ways in which the text offers a nuanced insight into the lived experiences of Black boys and men as genred, opposed to gendered, beings.

CHAPTER V: CONSIDERING HISTORICAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF BLACK MALE CONSCIOUSNESS (BMC) AS GENRE

Academic achievement of African American male students continues to be a prevalent topic of educational research and reform. In fact, it was the impetus for my original research interests and my pursuit of a terminal degree. Upon my entry into the Cultural Foundations program, I was adamant about exploring ways I could help address the ever-present achievement gap that exists between Black male learners and their white counterparts. However, as I became increasingly involved with the theoretical and philosophical groundings of the field, I realized there are more specific questions I need to ask and more nuanced concepts I need to explore related to the formal education of Black male students. This revelation came not only as a result of my advancement in the doctoral program, but it was also due to the daily work engaged as a 6-12 literacy supervisor for a school district. What I had come to realize was that much of the work I did in my professional life did not align with my academic pursuits; within the field of education, we put a great deal of effort into closing an achievement gap rooted in the negation of Black male students. Our energy, however, could be better spent exploring instructional models that emanate from the lived experiences of Black men and boys. With this in mind, I developed the following lines of inquiry:

1. How can Curry's (2017) distinction between gender and genre—as it relates to Black men and boys—contribute to the current instructional landscape of secondary English?
2. How might secondary English teachers and students use a literary framework specific to the lived experiences of Black men and boys to challenge gendered associations of Black masculinity?

Swanson et al. (2003) assert, “The most important and critical overarching flaw in research on Black youth, and boys particularly, is the absence of a systems-focused theoretical framework that can analyze, represent, and explain the mechanisms of experiences and outcomes” (pp. 610-611). Pedro Noguera (2008) also addresses the social and racial inequities present in the education. In doing so, he chronicles his experiences as an Afro-Latino male navigating the margins of the formal education system. Noguera (2008) uses his lived experiences to a case for what he believes is needed to change outcomes of African American male students: “What is needed to reverse these trends is more than a new program or policy. There must instead be a complete interrogation of the thinking that has allowed such practices to operate without challenge” (p. xx). He continues, “It is important for educators to understand that the practices that result in the marginalization of Black boys in school mirror the attitudes and beliefs that rationalize the marginalization of Black men in society at large” (Noguera, 2008, p. xxi). The Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework is my attempt to counter ways the educational system—instructional/pedagogical methods specifically—disregards how Black males’ lived experiences are marked by their mortality, thus leading to their academic and corporeal disposability. (Curry, 2017, p. 145) In addition to the signposts for analysis detailed and modeled in Chapter IV, I also hope to accomplish this through an evaluation of the historical context and instructional considerations that have informed the work.

Historical Considerations and Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre

Altering the course of education requires that one first engage and interrogate its historical context. Policies and practices that shape our educational system are birthed from the exclusionary and oppressive deeds that mark the inception of this institution. A system that boasts itself as one of democratic integrity is proven to be just the opposite as its history

illustrates the inextricable connections between a socially unjust past and a just as racist present. In fact, Apple and Franklin (2004) explicitly state, "As has been repeatedly argued here, the knowledge that got into schools in the past and gets into schools now is not random. It is selected and organized around sets of principles and values that come from somewhere, that represent particular view of normality and deviance, of good and bad, and of what 'good people act like'" (p. 61).

The American public school system—specifically, urban schooling—deriving from the common school movement of the nineteenth century (Larabee, 2010, p. 18) featured several emergent characteristics whose impact and implications have been long-lasting regarding school reform efforts (Larabee, 2010, p. 67) and schooling in general. According to Larabee (2010), the most influential aspect of the common school system was curriculum marginality or an "emphasis on commonality over content" (p. 73). Because most Americans were already literate prior to the inception of common schools, the aim of this movement was not to increase literacy rates (Larabee, 2010, p. 73). Instead, the mission of the movement—and prominent leader Horace Mann—was to provide a shared experience of schooling for white and immigrant attendees. Hence, instilling a sense of "community" (Larabee, 2010; Olneck, 1989; Apple and Franklin, 2004) was more important than the teaching and learning of content. The decentering of curriculum for the sake of community was a key characteristic of common schools. This focus on commonality and community, however, was a strategic move toward the "deculturalization" of non-white students and the continued supremacy of white culture. In fact, "In New York City in the 1850s, for example, when the public school system became increasingly solidified, schools were seen as institutions that could preserve the cultural hegemony of an embattled 'native' population. Education was the way in which the community life, values, norms, and economic

advantages of the powerful were to be protected. Schools could be great engines of moral crusade to make the children of immigrants and the Blacks like 'us'" (Apple & Franklin, 2004, p. 63). Urban and Wagoner (2000) echoes this sentiment in stating,

> What the common school crusade was designed to accomplish, however, was a more efficient form of school governance and management, one that would permit the schools to assimilate the great numbers of students they were currently enrolling and the increasing numbers that would come in succeeding years. (p. 88)

More recent reform attempts may present themselves less as "moral crusades" and more as matters of students' equal access to curricular content. However, the [desired] outcomes are identical: assimilation of non-white students, marginalization of particular student groups, and devaluation of certain epistemologies. One such example was the 2010 move made by most states to implement Common Core State Standards for the development of their mathematics and English language arts (ELA) curricula. To be exact, "Forty-one states, the District of Columbia, four territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have voluntarily adopted and are moving forward with the Common Core" (corestandards.org). This adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) accompanied a commitment to the consistent preparation of America's students for entry into the workforce and/or higher education. Unlike common schools, the CCSS initiative was an attempt to center the curriculum. However, its commitment to consistency embodied the spirit of the common school's emphasis on acculturation (Apple and Franklin, 2004, p. 64). Use of the term *common*, whether in relation to curriculum or otherwise, connotes the exclusion of certain student groups (i.e., students of color) and the cultural control of others (i.e., immigrants). Along these lines, Apple and Franklin (2004) assert, "the social and economic interests that served as the foundation upon which the most influential curriculum

workers acted were not neutral; nor were they random. They embodied commitments to specific economic structures and educational policies, which, when put into practice, contributed to inequality. The educational and cultural policies, and the vision of how communities should operate and who should have power in them, served as mechanisms of social control. These mechanisms did little to increase the relative economic or cultural efficacy of these groups of people who still have little power today" (p. 61). With the implementation of CCSS and its commitment to what is "common," these ghostly relics of common school reform were resurrected.

Apple and Franklin's (2004) statement, while made specifically regarding common schools, is also fitting for the development and adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS). For example, developers of CCSS tout the message that the standards provide "consistent learning goals across states" to not only "ensure all students are ready for success after high school" but to also help regain ground with our international peers (corestandards.org, retrieved June 14, 2018). This aligns with what Apple and Franklin (2004) describe as an embodied commitment to specific economic structures, for global competitiveness and student marketability align with neoliberal economic ideologies. Additionally, Hartong (2015), cited in Bellmann and Waldow (2007), asserts, "while the CCSS initiative promotes excellent education as a right for every American child, it simultaneously integrates this right with a complex system of responsibility and control, which is directed at the activation of human capital and entrepreneurial selves" (p. 214). The adoption of CCSS, then, can be characterized as a promotion of neoliberal principles through rhetorical tactics that seem to make sense and appear to be good for all students while masking the underpinnings of self-servitude. Furthermore, the Common Core State Standards initiative maintained an allegiance to existing educational

policies. For instance, what was not promised with CCSS implementation was a reexamination of the current use of standardized testing as the primary, or more precisely the sole, instrument for measuring student "achievement." Opposed to reassessing standardized assessment practices, the developers of CCSS anticipated and encouraged collaboration among states to develop both formative and summative common assessments that would correspond with the demands of the new standards (Kornhaber et al., 2017), a practice that supports neoliberal notions of meritocracy disguised as equal access. This façade of equal access also parallels common school's aim of acculturation. What students are given equal access to, what they are taught, is based on dominant culture's decisions about what knowledge is legitimate (Apple and Franklin, 2004, p. 61). As Apple and Franklin state, "the social and economic interests that served as the foundation upon which the most influential curriculum workers acted were not neutral; nor were they random" (p. 61). This same level of intent is true for CCSS. The common in Common Core, contributes to the control exerted by schools, for "Schools do no only control people; they also help control meaning. Since they preserve and distribute what is perceived to be 'legitimate knowledge'—the knowledge that 'we all must have,' schools confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups" (Apple & Franklin, 2004, p. 61), which furthers his point regarding educational and cultural polices serving as mechanisms of control that "did little to increase the relative economic or cultural efficacy of these groups of people who still have little power today" (p. 61). It is an acknowledgement and understanding of this power dynamic that has contributed to the development of my original genre and framework, which I approached with the spirit of intentionality as a way to combat what Apple and Franklin (2004) describe as "the social and economic interests that served as the foundation upon which the most influential curriculum workers acted" which "were not neutral; nor were they random" (p. 61).

Understanding the long-standing history of unequal distribution of education and power has been imperative to my work. I had to examine past models like the common school to identify, analyze, and combat the underlying, historical injustices present in our current educational system. Along these lines, Popkewitz (1997) states:

> How does history come into the equation of what we study as school practice and reform? At this point, my reply would seem obvious. What is constituted as teaching, learning, and school assessment is not merely "there" or negotiated by those who work in schools. The different curriculum foci inscribe ways of thinking and reasoning about community and self. The historicizing of the ways in which the objects of school (teaching, learning, administrations, curriculum) are constituted and change over time is important not only to an understanding of the past, but it also has important consequences in contemporary school reform. The rules of expression, differentiation and regulation cannot be assumed but must be historicized. (p. 143)

While I would not categorize Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts as an attempt at reform, I do aim to use my work in order to place current educational and instructional practices within a historical context, shedding light on the fact that inequities are not isolated incidents. Rather, they are the product of deep-seated histories and systems of oppression. Without concepts/frameworks like Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre that consider the inextricable link between education's past and present, we ignore voices of those like Hartong (2015) who asserts, "Invisibly, the CCSS concurrently created a centralised structure of governance by institusionalising certain educational values and norms, which, after more than 10 years, are most likely to have entered the minds of those they govern" (as cited in Bellmann & Waldow, 2007, p. 223), an assertion that makes visible the fact that the aims of

curricular reform models like Common Core State Standards are not a one-time occurrence but are the result of the deep-rooted historical and sociological issues to which it clings.

Implications of Practice with Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre

Even with my knowledge of the historical groundings discussed above, I am still an educator who is responsible for the immediate instruction of students who will inherit a world in which they had no hand in developing. This presents a duality I must somehow reconcile: a duality that is marked by—what some teachers often perceive to be—a disconnect between theory and practice. So, while I recognize the adoption of Common Core State Standards as an act of neutrality on the part of policy makers, I also know that there is no such thing (Freire, 1970). I owe students the assurance that whether they are headed to college or starting a career, they are being equipped with the skills to navigate a post-secondary world. Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre—and the related signposts—is my attempt at addressing the theory/practice dichotomy that often colors the way educators approach teaching and learning. I use the following sections to discuss considerations of how the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework might be used in conjunction with mandated secondary English instructional standards. I recognize these pedagogical considerations will not solve the previously discussed issues, but I anticipate they will start teachers and students on a trajectory toward engaging literature, specifically in relation to Black male bodies, in ways that explicitly name and confront inequities and dangers particular to Black males' lived experiences (Curry, 2017).

Instructional Considerations and Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre

Among a multitude of instructional practices, Socratic seminar is one widely embraced by good deal of the secondary English teachers I have worked with both locally and nationally.

"In a Socratic Seminar activity, students help one another understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in a text through a group discussion format. Students are responsible for facilitating their group discussion around the ideas in the text; they shouldn't use the discussion to assert their opinions or prove an argument. Through this type of discussion, students practice how to listen to one another, make meaning, and find common ground while participating in a conversation" (www.facinghistory.org). With Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre being a newly introduced framework, the Socratic Seminar may be more of an eventual step in increasing students' interpretive autonomy with Paideia Seminars making for a more scaffolded instructional approach. According to National Paideia Center, "We define Paideia Seminar as a collaborative intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about a text" (www.paideia.org/). The primary difference between the Socratic and Paideia seminars is the teacher is responsible for generating questions and facilitating the Paideia Seminar opposed to those actions being left to students. Similar to my views I shared in Chapter IV regarding strategies like close reading and annotating in the secondary English classroom, I do not disagree with the use of Socratic or Paideia Seminars. I do, however, recognize that these pedagogical practices may inherently value some ontologies and epistemologies over others. As such, teachers may inadvertently posture themselves as experts (the valued) and their students as novices (the undervalued), thus potentially imposing limitations on learning. To this point, Rancière (1991) asserts, "The Socratic method becomes what calls a perfected form of stultification. Like all learned masters, Socrates interrogates in order to instruct" (p. 29). For Rancière (1991), when teachers employ questioning solely for the sake of instruction and a subsequent recitation of information, they can impair students' intellectual development. This can be difficult to reconcile within the context of public education, specifically in the secondary

English classroom where there is the earnest desire to engage students "in the manner of men and not [just] in the manner of scholars" (Rancière, 1991, p. 29), but this desire is met with demands and consequences based on measurements of knowledge related to national standards and assessments. While Rancière (1991) did not have to consider teaching and learning within the context of current constraints experienced by educators, I do not believe his assertions to be any less true. However, I work daily with teachers whose realities do not present many opportunities to digest this discrepancy and to divest from it.

I use Table 11 to demonstrate an intersection between the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre signposts for analysis and Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for secondary English by providing possible seminar questions. This is not an attempt to create another instance where teachers are asked to follow a script of sorts, instead it is a model for use that leaves room for teachers to work collaboratively to create opportunities for students to engage the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and signposts in ways that attend to the language of the national standards while engaging texts in ways that challenge limited notions of Black masculinity.

Table 11. Signposts for Analysis and Potential Questions

Signposts for Analysis and Potential Seminar Questions		
College and Career Ready (CCR) Anchor Standard for Reading Literature (RL)	**Signpost for Analysis**	**Potential Seminar Question**
CCR.RL.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to	Stream of Consciousness	What role does *gendered racism* (Curry, 2017, p. 132) play in the character's eventual understanding of his Blackness in relation to the other?

Signposts for Analysis and Potential Seminar Questions		
College and Career Ready (CCR) Anchor Standard for Reading Literature (RL)	**Signpost for Analysis**	**Potential Seminar Question**
support conclusions drawn from the text.		
CCR.RL.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	Dominant/Counter narratives	How does the author develop themes contrary to historicized "dogmas of Black masculinity" (Curry, 2017, p. 41)?
CCR.RL.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.	Caricatures	In what ways does the author's development of character(s) combat the discursive production and reproduction of racial stereotypes that often define Black masculinity? (Curry, 2017, p. 206)
CCR.RL.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.	Double Consciousness	How does the author's structural choices contradict current theories of gender that assert Black males exist in a world of false consciousness that obstructs their ability to understand their position within patriarchal structures? (Curry, 2017, p. 41)

Note. Source: https://learning.ccsso.org/common-core-state-standards-initiative

[*]The grades 6–12 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

[**]The CCR anchor standards and high school grade-specific standards work in tandem to define college and career readiness expectations—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity.

As seen in Table 11, Curry's (2017) work with Black masculinity helped frame the questions I offer. The goal of these questions is to model how teachers can teach academic standards while challenging theoretical misgivings about Black men and boys. The idea here is just as there is no finite way to define Black masculinity, there are definitive answers to the questions posed. Instead, the goal is to provide teachers and students lenses for textual analysis that attend to the absence of "nuance, the attention to detail and contextual distinction" that "many theoretical account of Black gender relations because history is replaced by symbols that come to represent fixed ontological dispositions" (Curry, 2017, p. 199). Curry (2017) makes it no secret that he finds grave fault in traditional theories of gender that ignore the "actual vulnerabilities of Black males" (Curry, 2017, p. 199) in order to "protect white manhood and allow white womanhood to remain immaculate" (p. 152). The questions modeled in Table 11 do not explicitly mention white manhood or womanhood; however, due to an alignment with Curry's (2017) claims around the realities of Black males, I intend for these questions, and those alike, to open opportunities for readers to "analyze the life and experience of Black men and boys in America" (Curry, 2017, p. 229) and the world at large.

Curry (2017) states,

> If violence matters, if erasure matters, if the accuracy of understanding the lives of Black men is the aim of study, then we must concede that we are not liberating people in reality when we deny aspects of life that do not align with academic theories. (p. 152)

This is reminiscent of Rancière's (1991) critique so the Socratic method, as he states: "But whoever wishes to emancipate someone must interrogate him in the manner of men and not in the manner of scholars, in order to be instructed, not to instruct" (p. 29). I cannot be certain of whether Curry's (2017) supports the use of Socratic seminars; however, as demonstrated by the

quotations above, I believe he would be inclined to a agree with Rancière (1991) in that liberatory instruction is grounded in historical and social truths regardless of how ugly they may be. Additionally, implicit in his assertion that "… we are not liberating people in reality when we deny aspects of life that do not align with academic theories" (Curry, 2017, p. 152), is that by placing more value on theories about Black male bodies than on their lived experiences, we disregard the actualities of their existence. As a result, "Instead of condemning the negative mythology surrounding Black males and attempting to dig further into their actual thinking and activity in the world, academic theory revels in the stereotypes and anti-social caricatures concerning them" (Curry, 2017, p. 169). Again, I am of unsure of Curry's (2017) stance regarding Socratic seminars, more specifically their use in the secondary English classroom, but I think if asked he might offer the following as consideration for teachers as they plan seminar questions for facilitate students' interactions with the text and with one another:

1. **Essentialism**

How will my proposed questions help participants understand how essentialism "ties the biological marker of male to that which is patriarchal" (Curry, 2017, p 41) and examine how "the presenting of the biological sign for male totalizes our understanding and discourse" (Curry, 2017, pp. 191, 216)?

2. **Intersectionality Theories**

How does my plan account for the possible encounter of internalized notions of intersectionality that imply "because of his maleness, the Black male is always dominant because of his patriarchy, not vulnerable to it" (Curry, 2017, pp. 145, 208)?

3. **Gender and Racial Males**

How will this seminar serve as a counter to "current understanding of gender" that "makes the disparities under which racial males suffer ultimately irrelevant to the" texts "that account for Black maleness itself"? (Curry, 2017, p. 106, 131)

4. **Victims vs. Perpetrators**

How does my plan make explicit, and take up for discussion, the "historical patterns of Black male victimization and death" that "are often left out of narratives concerning the nature of [domestic] violence," thus sustaining "the almost exclusive focus on women as victims and men as perpetrators"? (Curry, 2017, p. 115)

5. **Disposability of Black Males**

How will the proposed prompts foster readings/discussions that recognize Black males as living human beings who are "more than the numbers indicating that Black males are social problems: on the street, inevitably dead, or permanently locked away"? (Curry, 2017, p. 129

6. **Stigmas surrounding Black Males**

How will this seminar help participants confront stigmas that characterize Black males' bodies that have been "raced and sexed peculiarly, configured as barbaric and savage, imagined to be a violent animal, not a human being" (Curry, 2017, p. 131)?

7. **Criminalization of Black Males**

How will this seminar help participants interrogate "the criminalization of Black men and boys" and its impact on their victimization (Curry, 2017, p. 133)?

8. **Racism and the Death of Black Males**

How will this seminar help participants conceptualize how "racism, taken only to be the hatred of one's skin color, erases the sexual vulnerability that Black males historically have endured at the hands of white men and women" (Curry, 2017, p. 145)?

9. **Racial Misandry vs. Black Male Vulnerabilities**

How does my plan account for misconceptions regarding the differences between racial misandry ("expresses the pathological aversion society holds toward Black males") and Black male vulnerabilities ("expresses the actual disadvantage and violence Black males suffer as both Black and male"; Curry, 2017, p. 170)?

10. **Exceptionalism and Black Males**

How will my proposed plan help participants understand how exceptionalism reduces Black men and boys to "unidimensional subjects who are hegemonic, mimetic, and invulnerable," making his "rape, his death, his poverty, his marginality" continuously "negotiated and negated" (Curry, 2017, p. 222)?

While I have imagined these prompts in consideration of how Curry (2017) might engage educators who are planning for and/or using Socratic or Paideia seminars with secondary English students, these questions can also help guide future work I hope to do with teachers interested in using seminars as a way of introducing the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework in their classrooms. I am guilty of having conducted professional learning sessions aligned with intersectionality theories that do offer specificity regarding the particular vulnerabilities of Black men and boys. I focused on the presumed academic needs of boys who were Black opposed to the actual needs of Black boys, a distinction Curry (2017) highlights in quoting Mutua (2013): "When intersectionality was applied to [B]lack men, it was initially

interpreted to suggest that '[B]lack men were privileged by gender and subordinated by race'; that is, [B]lack men sat at the intersection of the subordinating and oppressive system of race ([B]lack) and the privileged system of gender (men). Intuitively this notion seemed correct. It also seemed to support the dominant social and academic practice of examining the oppressive conditions that [B]lack men faced from a racial perspective." "[W]hile this interpretation of intersectionality seemed to capture some of the differentials between women and men in the [B]lack community, as in wage differentials for example, it did not capture the harsher treatment [B]lack men seemed to face…" (Curry, 2017, p. 221). Equipped with this nuance, I have created Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts to hopefully make Curry's (2017) work around and distinction between gender and genre—as it relates to Black men and boys— accessible for teachers and students. I hope this framework will encourage readers to engage Black male bodies, both living and literary, in ways that honor their full humanity by acknowledging them as vulnerable and subjugated because of (not despite) their sex designation (Curry, 2017, p. 135).

Table 11 and questioning considerations above demonstrate a potential connection between Curry's (2017) work and the classroom space. I recognize, however, that our current political climate—banning of books, circumventing of equity efforts, fear of indoctrination—is not conducive to the introduction and exploration of what can be seen as polarizing language and/or concepts. As such, I have created the following to assist teachers as they plan, instruct, and reflect in ways that align with the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework (see Table 12).

Table 12. Signposts for Analysis and Potential Questions

Common Core State Standards ANCHOR STANDARD	Signposts for Analysis & Potential Questions				
		Streams of Consciousness	**Double Consciousness**	**Caricatures(s)**	**Dominant/Counter Narrative(s)**
	CCR.R.1	Which quote from the text demonstrates the author's newly acquired sense of being (self)?	What conclusion can we draw from the author's interactions with…?	In what ways does the author/speaker negate traditional views of Black manhood?	Which line(s) from the text best support a departure from historical accounts of Black manhood?
	CCR.R.2	In what ways does the described disruption contribute to the overall theme?	What role does the character's internal dialogue play in the refinement of the overall theme?	In what does the author develop a theme that combats common stereotypes about Black men and boys?	Write an objective summary that describes how the author crafts a narrative that is contrary to historical accounts of Black manhood?
	CCR.R.3	How does the character's encounter with _____ challenge or confirm his sense of being (self)?	How does the character's decision to _____ influence his ability to _____?	How does the character's thoughts about _____ help dismantle negative generalizations about Black men and boys?	How does the character's interactions with _____ offer a perception different from those generally held about Black men and boys?
	CCR.R.4	How does the author's use of the phrase _____ demonstrate the character's shift in being (self)?	How does the author's use of the words ____ and ___ indicate the character's enactment of double consciousness?	How does the author's use of the word/phrase _____ to describe the character impact the meaning or tone of the text?	Which words or phrases from the text help shape meaning and messages that counter those that typically surround Black men/boys and their lived experiences?
	CCR.R.5	How does the character's shift in being (self) described in paragraph _____ impact the overall text?	How does chapter _____ help demonstrate the impact of the character's enactment of double consciousness?	How does the following sentence from the text serve as a divergence from deficit views of Black men and boys: "_____."?	How does the author use the events in chapter _____ to provide an account that centralizes the lived experiences of Black men and boys?

These questioning techniques alone cannot overthrow concerted political efforts to preserve heteronormative white male power structures. The truth is, a deliberate empowerment of Black men and boys can serve to (re)produce resistance among both white and non-white groups whose convictions such a movement will threaten. I do not claim to have the answer for how to resolve these contentions. As with any curriculum or instructional framework, I can merely offer implementation considerations and trainings.

Considerations for Professional Learning with Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as Genre

My role as a professional development facilitator does not exist solely within the parameters of my job's daily duties. In addition to professional learning sessions, I hold for English teachers in the school district I serve, I also do a good deal of consulting work for an organization whose primary goal is to improve academic outcomes for Black and brown students by engaging educators in processes that promote equitable practices in teaching and learning, namely through grade-level instruction of content-area standards for all students. To accomplish this, the organization develops curricula specific to the roles of conference attendees: content teacher, administrator, curriculum leader, etc. They regularly add new professional learning offerings to reach the extensive range of roles and contexts in which educators serve. I propose that Black Male Consciousness (BMC) function as the framework for a pathway of professional learning that extends beyond the noble inclusivity represented by the phrase *Black and brown students* and toward the necessary exclusivity personified by Black manhood. In the spirit of Critical Race Theory (CRT) this can be seen as a way of combating essentialism, for "the forms of that oppression may vary from group to group. And if they do, the needs and political strategies of groups fighting for social change will vary as well" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 65). If teaching is indeed a political act (Freire, 1970) then the Black Male Consciousness

(BMC) as genre framework can be seen as political strategy used to not only counter essentialism, but to fight for social change that will recognize Black males for the double minorities that they are. Concerning double minorities, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) state,

> Ignoring the problem of intersectionality, as liberalism often does, risks doing things by half measures and leaving major sectors of the population dissatisfied. Classical liberalism also has been criticized as overly caught up in the search for universals, such as admissions standards for universities or sentencing guidelines that are the same for all. The crits point out that this approach is apt to do injustice to individuals whose experience and situation differ from the norm. They call for individualized treatment—"context"—that pays attention to minorities' lives. This deficiency is apt to be particularly glaring in the case of "double minorities," such as black women, gay Latinos, or Muslim women wearing head scarves, whose lives are twice removed from the experience of mainstream Americans. (p. 65)

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) view intersectionality as a type of crossroads of identity that has and is not considered in the creation laws and other societal standards of normativity. Curry (2017), on the other hand would argue that these narrow interpretations of intersectionality are the problem, as they disregard the fact that Black men are not only subjugated by way of their race but also by a sexual designation that assumes a proximity to patriarchal power they ultimately do not possess. It is because of this faulty *sexual link* (Fanon, 1967, 2008) that Black men and boys are not acknowledged as victims but as enactors of violence (Curry, 2017). While the organization's commitment to equitable educational outcomes for Black and brown students aligns with aspects of Critical Race Theory (CRT), the inclusion of the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework would make center the unique lived experiences of

Black male bodies who are the constant target of gendered racism (Curry, 2017). Additionally, I assert the same can be done for males of other non-white groups. Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and the related signposts are not meant to separate but to inspire other non-white groups to acknowledge the complexities and vulnerabilities of their men and ways to them in the classroom space. How this may look both regionally and nationally, or locally and globally (Messerschmidt, 2016) will differ; these are differences I recognize but for which I do not claim to have large enough scope to reconcile. Building partnerships, coalitions if you will, with organizations that are already immersed in this work could potentially add nuance to the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework, as well as expand its reach to other non-white groups who experience life in the margins.

Akin to Curry's (2017) work with gendered racism and the victimization of Black men and boys, is Bryan's (2022) assertion, "It is beyond tragic that we have so few books and other texts that accomplish what I am attempting to do here: to promote what Carey (2019) refers to as the comprehensive mattering of Black boys (and male teachers) beyond their deficit and one-dimensional constructions. Comprehensive mattering deals with honoring the full humanity of and acknowledging all the positive attributes Black boys (and male teachers) have to offer (Carey, 2019). However, I fully understand that ignoring such mattering of Black boys and male teachers is among the consequences of living *under*, and *through* a white supremacist system where neither the lives of Black boys nor teachers matter" (p. 12). Bryan (2022) continues,

> Most white people tend to essentialize Black boys and male teachers or view them all as having similar characteristics and interests. This is taught and reinforced in media, popular press, curriculum, schools, and society writ large. There are many ways to be a Black boy and/or a Black male teacher. While some boys may enjoy sports, others may

> not (Bryan, 2019); while some boys may enjoy hand games, others may not; and so on. Dumas and Nelson (2016) proposed that we use the term 'boyhoods' instead of 'boyhood' to describe the varying ways on can be a boy. As such, I encourage readers of this book to consider Black boyhoods and acknowledge the varying ways one can be a Black boy. (p. 16)

While I am aware that Bryan's (2022) words can (and do) apply to Black and brown teachers, I am also cognizant of the fact that majority of the teacher work force is comprised of white individuals, more specifically white women. This brings to mind conversations I've had with numerous English teachers (usually white women) who strongly believe engaging students with texts that feature Black protagonists is one of the most effective ways of recognizing and honoring the comprehensive mattering (Carey, 2019, as cited in Bryan, 2022, p. 16) of Black male students. My response always offers the reminder that the Black (male) experience is not universal (Curry, 2017); choosing a book based solely on a character's phenotypical similarities to students reinforces the notion that all Black males experience the world in the exact same way. (Curry, 2017). One may argue that providing a set of signposts for analysis of texts written by and about Black males can also reinforce monolithic views of Black boys by treating the experiences narrated by individual voices as representations of the collective group. However, Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre and its signposts are not meant to make the Black male's lived experiences—or even interpretations of these texts—universal; instead, I designed the Black Male Consciousness (BMC) as genre framework, to challenge what Bryan (2022) refers to as *literacy normativity*. More specifically, Bryan (2022) states,

> The dangers of literacy normativity are not only inclusive of types of anti-Black violence introduced and discussed in Chapter two, but other consequences of which early

> childhood teachers should be aware. Literacy normativity can exacerbate the psychological erosion and problems produced by anti-Black misandry. Due to the wide usage of literacy normative practices in early childhood education that do not support positive views of Black boys, it is essential that we think deeply about how those practices omit, misrepresent, and tokenize Black boys' cultural ways of knowing and being (Baines et al., 2018). Literacy normativity also promotes stereotypes and biases about Black boys, oppressing and dehumanizing them. It disregards the collective and individual identities of Black children and upholds anti-Black misandry in Black boyhood. (p. 107)

In short, when we embrace literacy or literary normativity, we disregard the historical actualities that underpin curriculum design and instructional routines that serve to govern individual expression, restrict differentiation of epistemologies, and reinforce the self-regulation (Foucalt, 1977) of [Black male] bodies.

Conclusion

My work, while philosophical in nature, is also driven by the unyielding love and concern I have for the Black male youth in my life. As such, I have chosen to conclude my work with a short letter I have penned to these very individuals.

Since the time of each of your births (or my introduction to you), I have been so intrigued by the promise and possibilities possessed by each of you. As cliché as it may sound, looking at your [newborn] faces reminded me of looking at a blank canvas. You all represented the inception of a new artistic idea, the conception of an envisioned masterpiece. You each granted me yet another opportunity to watch closely as God, the ultimate artist, with every stroke crafted the intricacies that make you each unique and beautiful creations. And while I stare at each of

you in awe, I am also keenly aware that the works of art I admire so dotingly, will be viewed much differently under the inspection of the dominant gaze.

The thing about art is that once it is put on display, it becomes open to the interpretations and critiques of its onlookers. The same will become true for each of you as you begin to navigate this world. There will be some who stare at you in sheer amazement, while others observe you in revulsion. More specifically, you will learn that while those of us who love you will encourage you to embrace every aspect of your personhood, there are institutions and individuals who will do just the opposite. In these instances, I want you to feel empowered to use your voice to offer "oppositional ideologies" that "attempt to challenge that common sense by providing alternative frames, ideas, and stories based on the experiences of subordinate races" (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, pp. 9–10). This is something I have only recently begun to do, for I have spent the last three decades of my life believing common sense ideologies (Schwalbe, 2008) to be a notable trait I should aim to embody because this is what I was taught both explicitly and implicitly. What I have recently learned, and hope to teach you, is that blind acceptance of dominant ideologies only expresses the interests of the dominant race (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 9). My hope is that you resist the urge to consent, either actively or passively, to domination and social norms, norms that have been designed and reinforced to not only solidify your subordinate status but to also define you as a deviant.

Art is also a type of invention. An artist starts with an idea, and from that idea fashions their creation. Believe it or not the same can be said for the social world and the roles you occupy within it. Truths about who you are and what you represent as a Black male are inventions of the social world (Schwalbe, 2008). These "truths" then become real parts of the social world and its hierarchical structure. Do not let these unfounded notions of Black maleness

define you, for when you accept normalized beliefs and behaviors as your barometer of good and bad, you are then more likely to categorize yourself using the same gauge. And if what Johnson (2014) says is true, then you too will begin to believe yourself a deviant, as your Blackness places you outside the moral belonging associated with whiteness. Always remember, your race is not some violation of a moral code. Instead, it is the social construction of a system meant to maintain the dominance of one group of persons over others. In fact, as it relates to the norms used to create such moral codes and social systems, Johnson (2014) states,

> Like every aspect of culture, norms are made up. They are not what people do but ideas *about* what people do. Like beliefs, norms refer to some aspect of reality, such as the definition of murder. Like values, norms are linked to cultural judgements about what is considered more or less desirable … (p. 44)

Additionally, Johnson (2014) asserts, "Norms are ideas about not only how people behave but also how they appear and in some cases who they are" (p. 45). To reiterate, "norms are made up," so question them always and unwittingly accept them never. When you consent to norms, you are consenting to implicit (and in some cases, explicit) judgements about who you are. You are contributing to the normalization of whiteness and further dehumanizing your existence and your experiences as a Black male.

Art is a form of representation and resistance, and while it can be said that each piece is created to express what an artist finds beautiful in this world, not every observer sees that same beauty. One's background, experiences, and/or social affiliations can influence the ways in which they have normalized and therefore acknowledge beauty. The same occurs with dominant culture and the lens/gaze that it affixes over the eyes of those who consent (either passively or actively) to it. Unfortunately, as masterful as the work of your Creator is, the dominant race of

the social world has ascribed notions of common sense and social norms that continue to reinforce your Blackness as a stain on a perfectly good piece of canvas. I believe, however, that you all will not accept this relegation and degradation that the social order has associated with your Blackness. Instead, you will take these seeds I have planted and use them to begin a harvest of knowledge that will help you to resist and revolt against all things contrary to the acknowledgement that your Blackness is the canvas on which masterpieces are realized.

I will end in the same fashion that I started, informing you of the promise and potential I see in each of you. While I do not know how the final piece will look, I am more than confident that it will be priceless. I know that you will continue to be shaped and sculpted by what I have provided here. More importantly, I know I have given you pieces from which you can build upon early in life, for I want you to have the head start I did not. I want you to not only realize those systems that oppress you, but I want you to feel empowered to challenge them. I want you to recognize that what dominant culture classifies as flaws, are intentional strokes of your Creator's hand, designed to promote difference and acceptance.

With Love,

Auntie

REFERENCES

Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of emotion*. Edinburgh University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology*: *Orientations, objects, others.* Duke University Press.

Apple, M., & Franklin, B. (2004). *Curricular history and social control in ideology and curriculum* (pp. 59–76). Routledge Falmer.

Baines, J., Tisdale, C., & Long, S. (2018). *We've been doing it your way long enough: Choosing the culturally relevant classroom*. Teachers College Press.

Beers, K., & Probst, R. (2013). *Notice and note: Strategies for close reading.* Scholastic.

Beers, K., & Probst, R. (2016). *Reading nonfiction: Notice & note-stances, signposts, and strategies.* Scholastic.

Beers, K., & Probst, R. (2017). *Disrupting thinking: Why how we read matters*. Scholastic.

Bellmann, J., & Waldow, F. (2007). The weird alliance between technocratic educational reform emphatic progressive education. *Bildung Und Erziehung*, *60*(4), 481–503.

Black, M. (2007). Fanon and DuBosian double consciousness. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, *5*(3), 394–404.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Brown, A. L. (2017). On Black males in history, theory and education. *Race, Gender, and Class Journal*, *24*(1-2), 107–119.

Bryan, N. (2019). Playing with or like the girls: Advancing the performance of 'multiple masculinities in black boys' childhood play in US early childhood classrooms. *Gender and Education*, *31*(3), 309–326.

Bryan, N. (2022). *Toward a Blackboycrit pedagogy: Black boys, male teachers, and early childhood classroom practices.* Routledge.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). *Racism without racists: Colorblind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America* (4th ed.). Rowan & Littlefield.

Butler, J. (2009). *Frames of war: When is life grievable*? Verso Books.

Callejo Perez, D. M., Breault, D. A., & White, W. (2014). *Curriculum as spaces, community, and the politics of place*. Peter Lang.

Carey, R. (2019). Imagining the comprehensive mattering of black boys and young men in society and schools: Toward a new approach. *Harvard Education Review*, *89*(3), 370–396.

Coates, T.-N. (2015). *Between the world and me.* Spiegel & Grau.

Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and power.* Allen and Unwin.

Connell, R. (1995). *Masculinities.* Polity Press.

Curry, T. (2017a). Michael Brown and the need for a genre study of Black male death and dying. In S. Collins, B. A. Manninen, J. M. Gately, & E. Comerford (Eds.), *Being ethical* (pp. 241–247). Broadview Press.

Curry, T. (2017b). *The man-not: Race, class, genre, and the dilemmas of black manhood.* Temple University Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory* (3rd ed.). New York University Press.

Dumas, M., & Nelson, J. (2016). Reimagining Black boyhood: Toward a critical framework for educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, *86*(1), 27–47.

Duncan-Andrade, J., & Morrell, E. (2007). Critical pedagogy and pedagogy and popular culture in an urban secondary English classroom. In P. McLaren & J. L. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Critical pedagogy: Where are we now?* (pp. 183–199). Peter Lang.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1897). Strivings of the Negro people.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (2004, 2016). *The souls of Black folk*. Paradigm Publishers: Routledge.

Dyer, R. (1997). *White*. Routledge.

Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2016, March 22). Native son. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/topic/Native-Son

Enjeti, A. (2018). *It's time to diversify and decolonize our schools' reading lists.* Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/time-diversify-decolonise-schools-reading-lists-180318100326982.html

Fanon, F. (1967, 2008). *Black skin, white masks* (C. L. Markmann, Trans.) [Peau Noir, Masques Blancs]. Grove Weidenfeld. Original work published 1952.

Foucalt, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison.* Pantheon Books.

Frankenburg, R. (1993). *White women, race matters: The social construction of whiteness*. University of Minnesota Press.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Seabury Press.

Freire, P. (2016). *Education for critical consciousness.* Bloomsbury.

Frow, J. (2015). *Genre*. Routledge.

Glesne, C. (2015). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Pearson.

Gordon, L. R., Dayan-Herzbrun, S., & Cornell, D. (2015). *What Fanon said: A philosophical introduction to his life and thought*. Fordham University Press.

Harrison, L. (2010). Black adolescent identity, double-consciousness, and a sociohistorically constructed adolescence. In K. Lee et al. (Eds.), *Developmentalism in early childhood and middle grades education* (pp. 131–147). Palgrave Macmillan.

Hartong, S. (2015). New structures of power and regulation within 'distributed' education policy – the example of the US Common Core State Standards Initiative. *Journal of Education Policy, 31*(2), 1–13.

Hill Collins, P. (2006). A telling difference: Dominance, strength, and Black masculinities. In A. Mutua (Ed.), *Progressive Black masculinities* (pp. 73–97). Routledge.

hooks, b. (2014). *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Hutchinson, D. (2001). Identity crisis: Intersectionality, multidimensionality, and the development of an adequate theory of subordination. *Michigan Journal of Race and Law*, *6*(2), 285–317.

James, W. (1892). The stream of consciousness. *Psychology*, pp. 224–290.

Johnson, A. (2014). *The forest and the trees: Sociology as life, practice, and promise*. Temple University Press.

Johnson, T. H. (2018). Challenging the myth of Black male privilege. *Spectrum: A Journal for Black Men, 6*(2), 21–42.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2008). *Critical pedagogy primer* (2nd ed.). Peter Lang.

Kornhaber, M. L., Barkauskas, N. J., Griffith, K.M., Sausner, E., & Mahfouz, J. (2017). The common core's promises and pitfalls from the perspectives of policy entrepreneurs and ground-level actors. *Journal of Educational Change, 18,* 385–412.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465–491. Retrieved from https://learning.ccsso.org/common-core-state-standards-initiative

Larabee, D. F. (2010). *Someone has to fail: The zero-sum game of public schooling.* Harvard University Press.

Martinez, A. (2020). *Counterstory: The rhetoric and writing of critical race theory.* Conference on College Composition and Communication of the National Counsel of Teachers of English. Library of Congress.

McGilvary, E. B. (1907). The stream of consciousness. *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods, 4*(9), 225–235.

Messerschmidt, J. W. (2016). *Masculinities in the making: From local to global.* Rowman and Littlefield.

Monk, J. (2019). *Exploring why African American males choose to teach in elementary schools: Three portraits* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro). Retrieved from https://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/Monk_uncg_0154D_12995.pdf

Mutua, A. D. (2006). Theorizing progressive Black masculinities. In A. Mutua (Ed.), *Progressive Black masculinities* (pp. 3-42). Routledge.

Mutua, A. D. (2013). Multidimensionality is to masculinities what intersectionality is to feminism. *Nevada Law Journal, 13*(2), 341–367.

Natsoulas, T. (1992). The stream of consciousness: I. William James's pulses. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality, 12*(1), 3–21. https://doi.org/10.2190/247K-7RDX-NLX8-ME2D

Noguera, P. (2008). *The trouble with Black boys … and other reflections on race, equity, and the future of public education*. Jossey-Bass.

Olneck, M. R. (1989). Americanization and the education of immigrants, 1900-1925: An analysis of symbolic action. *American Journal of Education*, *97*(4), 398–423.

Peterson, C. (2022). Frantz Fanon. *Encyclopedia Britannica.* Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frantz-Fanon

Pillow, W. (2011). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the users of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *16*(2), 175–196.

Rancière. J. (1991). *The ignorant schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation.* Stanford University Press.

Rennie, D. (2012). Qualitative research as methodical hermeneutics. *American Psychological Association*, *17*(3), 385–398.

Roberts Forde, K. (2014). *The Fire Next Time* in the civil sphere: Literary journalism and justice in America 1963. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, *15*(5), 573–588.

Robles-Ramamurthy, B. (2018). Between the world and me. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online*, *46*(2), 271–273.

Saint-Aubin, A. F. (1994). Testeria: The dis-ease of Black men in white supremacist, patriarchal culture. *Calaloo*, *17*(4), 1054–1073.

Schwalbe, M. (2008). *The sociologically examined life: Pieces of the conversation* (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Seebohm, T. M. (2004). *Hermeneutics: Method and methodology.* Springer Science and Business Media.

Smits, H., & Naqvi, R. (Eds.). (2015). *Framing peace: Thinking about & enacting curriculum as radical hope.* Peter Lang.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (2014). *Double consciousness.* Retrieved from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/double-consciousness/

Stanley, T. (2014). Antiracism without guarantees: A framework for rethinking racism in schools. *Critical Literacy: Theories & Practices, 8*(1), 4–19.

Swanson, D. P., Cunningham, M., & Spencer, M. B. (2003). Black males' structural conditions, achievement patterns, normative needs, and "opportunities." *Urban Education, 38*(5), 608–633.

Tatum, A. (2006). Engaging African American males in reading. *Educational Leadership, 63*(5), 44–49.

Tatum, A. (2009). *Reading for their life: (Re)building the textual lineages of African American adolescent males.* Heinemann.

Tatum, A. (n.d.). *Enabling texts: Texts that matter.* Retrieved from https://ngl.cengage.com/assets/downloads/edge_pro0000000030/am_tatum_enabling_texts.pdf

Urban, W. J., & Wagoner, Jr., J. L. (2000). *American education: A history* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Wright, R. (1987). *Native son.* Perennial Library (Original work published 1940).

Yosso, T. (2006). Toward a critical race curriculum. *Equality and Excellence in Education, 35*(2), 93–107.

Zimmerman, J. (2015). *Hermeneutics: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.