INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE: BLACK MALES IN STEM (PART 2)

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Since the early 2000s, Black men and boys have garnered increasing attention in the education theoretical and scientific literature. Over this period, numerous peer-reviewed journals, such as Urban Education (Gordon, 2003), The Journal of Men’s Studies (Moore and Herndon, 2003), Teachers College Record (Jackson and Moore, 2006; Warren et al., 2016), American Behavioral Scientist (Jackson and Moore, 2008), Boyhood Studies (Fergus and Bennett, 2018), The Journal for Specialists in Group Work (Steen and Hines, 2020a,b), Professional School Counseling (Moore et al., 2021), School Psychology Review (Woods et al., 2023), and Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development (Burt et al., 2023), have devoted special issues to Black men and boys in education. Regardless of the journal, each special issue devotes serious attention toward pinpointing and examining widespread educational vulnerabilities among Black men and boys, while at the same time offering reasonable suggestions to mitigate them. In most instances, the special issues advance greater understanding of Blackness and male-ness in education and offer reasonable explanations on how the two combined identities are negatively comprehended across the American educational enterprise and beyond. To that end, Black men and boys face a myriad of obstacles in education that often deter or prohibit them from fully accessing and optimizing educational opportunities (Noguera, 2008).

Without any doubt, extant scientific and theoretical literature has documented the peculiar but distinctive status that Black men and boys occupy in American society (Burt et al., 2023; Davis, 2003; Noguera, 2008; Moore et al., 2021; Reeves, 2022) and has amplified the acute challenges they endure across a variety of social contexts, including education (Moore, 2006; Moore et al., 2021). Black men and boys experience education differently from other student populations (Moore et al., 2008; Reeves, 2022), which commonly yield uneven education outcomes for them (Flowers et al., 2003). In such instances, they feel estranged, unsupported, and disconnected in classrooms at every juncture of education (Villavicencio, 2023; Wint et al., 2022). Negative student perceptions of teachers and instructors – as a result of uninspiring instruction, adverse
forms of treatment, and insignificant student-teacher interactions—frequently contribute to such feelings (Flowers et al., 2003; Ford and Moore, 2013). Academic disengagement (Dixson and Gentzis, 2023; Flowers et al., 2003), complacency (Ford and Moore, 2013), and disidentification (James, 2003; Noguera, 2008) are some of the warning signs or manifestations of educational dissatisfaction.

Compared to other male demographic groups, Black men and boys have lower high school graduation rates, lower college retention and graduation rates, and lower employment rates (Reeves, 2022; Villavicencio, 2023). They are underrepresented in gifted and other advanced academic programs at the K-12 level (Ford and Moore, 2013) and have lower college enrollment and graduation rates compared to their Black female counterparts (Jackson and Moore, 2006, 2008; Reeves, 2022). With little indication of changing soon, these education trends have continued to widen over the years (Reeves, 2022; Villavicencio, 2023).

As guest editors, we are excited to present to the readership of the Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering (JWMSE) and the broader STEM education research community the second special issue focusing on Black males in STEM. Because of the overwhelming positive response to the topic and overall quality of manuscript submissions, we were able to compose a second issue—thanks to Julie P. Martin, the editor-in-chief of JWMSE. Like the earlier special issue (Hines et al., 2023), the second edition comprises five articles for a total of ten combined articles, not including both introductions. Thus, regardless of the issue, examining the STEM experiences of Black males is a central theme.

We believe that the double special issue offers a broader view of common educational experiences Black men and boys have in STEM and how varied factors work independently and collectively to catalyze or inhibit Black men and boys’ STEM interest and engagement (Hines et al, 2023). Broadly speaking, the two-part special issue contributes to a growing theoretical and scientific literature base on Black males in education while filling a major void in the STEM literature of education focusing on Black men and boys. As noted in the first issue, “Very few scientific STEM journals, if any, have devoted two issues to Black males” (p. ix). We feel both honored and proud to have the opportunity to guest edit the two volumes. Hopefully, the STEM education community will become more acquainted with some of the grand challenges Black men and boys endure in STEM education and ascertain a better understanding of exemplary practices, approaches, and models that enhance STEM interest, preparation, experiences, connections, and opportunities among Black men and boys.

REFERENCES


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