

# Reclaiming the Conveyor Belt: Physical Education Teacher Education as a Pipeline to the Professoriate for Black Males

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There is a plethora of scholarship concerning the lack of academic achievement among Black males in the United States. Within higher education, this lack of achievement is represented as the difficult matriculation of Black males through their undergraduate experience and their lack of representation in the doctoral pipeline. The lack of representation has been explicitly documented within physical education teacher education and kinesiology scholarship—having been framed as the extinction of Black professionals in our field. Despite the ongoing deficit research about Black males and education, the purpose of this article is to present a framework for the recruiting, sustaining, and supporting of Black males to the professoriate through physical education teacher education. We utilized our personal experiences in a Black male doctoral pipeline to detail how physical education teacher education can be leveraged to mentor Black males within the field and others.

**Keywords:** constellation mentoring, cascade mentoring, PETE, Black physical educators, graduate school, athletics


There is a plethora of scholarship concerning the lack of academic achievement among Black males in the United States (Dyce, 2013; Harper, 2012). Within higher education, this perceived lack of achievement is not only represented as the difficult matriculation of Black males through their undergraduate experience but also in their lack of representation in the doctoral pipeline, which is reflected in their lack of representation in college administrative and tenured positions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The struggles for representation among Black males have been documented several times within physical education teacher education (PETE) and kinesiology scholarship (Hodge & Wiggins, 2010; Smith & Jamieson, 2017; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2011).

However, in this manuscript, we contribute to another tradition of Black scholarship within PETE, one that highlights frameworks for the successful recruiting, retaining, and ongoing support of Black males in the doctoral PETE (D-PETE) pipeline (Keith & Russell, 2013; Prince & Snyder, 2017). This article proposes a framework for recruiting, sustaining, and supporting Black males to the professoriate through PETE. Note that we are not referring to recruitment as a socializing process into the field of physical education (Lawson, 1982, 1983). By recruiting, we mean how faculty utilize their social networks to convince prospective students to join their doctoral programs. We utilized our personal experiences in a doctoral pipeline to detail how PETE can be leveraged to mentor Black male faculty within our discipline and related fields. To do this, we build our framework upon three key concepts, a reframing or reclaiming of William Rhoden's (2007) conveyor belt, constellation and cascade mentoring, and the notion of PETE (i.e., physical education) as the mother discipline.

Our conveyor belt is a reimagining of William Rhoden's (2007) conceptualization of the alienation dilemma of Black male athletes. Rather than emphasize the exploitative systems that prey on Black

males' sports fantasies, we highlight a pipeline that leads to a place in the professoriate. Constellation and cascade mentoring refer to the multiple mentoring and social support networks needed to guide and develop Black males through the PETE conveyor belt. PETE as a mother discipline refers to how physical education is the progenitor of several related fields, including sports nutrition, sports medicine, kinesiology, sports history, and many others. We will conclude this article with practical suggestions on how PETE programs can build their pipelines and how they are crucial to PETE's survival in the United States. This article is intended to be conceptual and not empirical, our approach is meant to be a critical reflection of the authors' experiences—meaning that we are offering a conceptual framework that is as much experiential as it is theoretical. Each author includes their perspective, given their positionality within higher education and the PETE ecosystem.

The first author is a current D-PETE student and former Division I student-athlete who earned his bachelor's and master's degree at a historically Black college/university (HBCU) in fields other than PETE but spent 6 years working as a physical educator and athletic director at schools in the Republic of Panama, the country of his father's birth. His father immigrated to the United States on a tennis scholarship at an HBCU where he majored in physical education. He followed in the footsteps of other Black Panamanian athletes who have migrated to the same HBCU since the 1950s. The second author is an associate professor working as a PETE educator at a Hispanic serving institution. Each of his degrees is in either physical education or adapted physical education. He was trained at both HBCUs and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) for his undergraduate and graduate studies. The third author is also a former Division I football player from a Power five program. He earned his bachelor's (sports management) and master's degrees (educational policy) from a PWI. He is a higher education professional who has spent most of his career working as an athletic administrator. The first and second authors are part of an academic family, the Heman Sweatt Center for Black Males at The University of Texas at Austin, that has recruited and trained over 20 Black male Ph.D. and professional students in many fields,

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including public health, PETE, education leadership, education policy, cultural studies, law, and history. It should be noted that nearly one-third of this academic family were student-athletes at the undergraduate level. In consideration of our identities, we use the term Black throughout this article to refer to individuals of direct African descent both on the continent of Africa and throughout the African diaspora. Because the first and second authors have been trained in D-PETE, their epistemologies (i.e., ways of knowing) orient this article. As PETE insiders, we have experienced PETE as a mother discipline with the potential to reclaim an educational system that invalidates the holistic development of Black males.

Similar to offering the authors' positionalities and epistemologies, providing historical context for the proposed framework is equally important. We begin with a brief history, which sets the foundation for physical education as a mother discipline, then we historicize the pipeline of Black males in PETE, athletics, and academia. This is followed by a description of Rhoden's (2007) conveyor belt, an exploitative system that fosters the matriculation of Black males through an athletic pipeline. Following the historical contextualization, we present our framework for "reclaiming" the conveyor belt pipeline as a means of supporting the matriculation of Black males to the professoriate through PETE. This includes presenting the critical elements of this reclaimed conveyor belt pipeline—kinship, cascade and constellation mentoring, and PETE as mother discipline. Finally, we discuss the value of our "conveyor belt pipeline" in facilitating more Black males gaining access to the professoriate.

Throughout this article, we use Black, African American, and Black American to reference the individuals. Our use of Black refers to anyone of African descent regardless of their ethnic ancestry or national citizenship. We use African American to refer directly to Black people who are citizens of the United States of America who are popularly referred to as African Americans. Black American denotes individuals of African descent from throughout the Americas connected through a history of the transatlantic slave trade forcefully trafficked to different places in the Americas.

## Historical Context

This historical section provides the history of precursor African American physical educators of the early 20th century, Edwin Bancroft (E.B.) Henderson and Ralph Metcalfe, educators who sought to use athletics and physical education to combat the social exclusion of Black youth from mainstream society. Their work was not limited to the United States but extended beyond its borders to provide similar opportunities for Black youth of the Black Diaspora. This brief section serves to disrupt mainstream histories of modern physical education by centering around the contributions of early Black physical educators.

Scholars have traced the roots of modern physical education back to the classical era, often eschewing the traditions of people who are not of Western Eurasian heritage. The history of physical education bends toward valuing Western contributions to the field. In the history of physical education, Phillips and Roper (2006) point out that the attention given to the ancient Greek physical culture that lasted roughly 1,000 years is more than the thousands of years worth of attention given to Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Hittite, Assyrian, Persian, Hebrew, Mycenaean, and Minoan physical cultures. In addition to ancient societies, the mainstream history of physical education is divided into two other distinct

periods from the Middle Ages to Reformation and the modern era. While not the focal point of this article, we argue there is a third historical frame, a history of the margins, that recognizes the contributions of people outside of the mainstream. For example, Verbrugge (2012) provides a history of women in physical education, which includes the contributions of Black women who advocated for adequate physical education and sports programs for African Americans, like Maryrose Reeves Allen and Anita J. Turner, the latter of whom was influential in guiding the career of E.B. Henderson (Smith & Jamieson, 2017), the great physical educator, historian, activist, and mentor (Wiggins, 1999).

Although it is not often recognized as a contributing factor, physical activity as a conduit for developing a sense of self has a long-standing place within the Black American experience. During the times of enslavement and, indeed, before Africans were forced into bondage, they used their bodies to form healthy relationships and bonds. Some scholars have marked the period of enslavement and the use of the Black body as something located within a slave economy (Hawkins, 2013; Rhoden, 2007). Quotes from Fredrick Douglass' memoirs also dismissed the use of sport among enslaved Africans as entertainment and a way to distract Black people from more important issues, such as liberation (Douglass & Jacobs, 2000). While dismissing the value of sport, Douglass acknowledged the bonds he shared with other enslaved Black men. Historians of the homosocial world of enslaved Africans in the Americas have highlighted the importance of friendship, bonds, and mentorship among enslaved African men and their descendants (Desch-Obi, 2008; Lussana, 2016). In the Atlantic world, enslaved Africans demonstrated acts of obligation and stewardship among each other (Sweet, 2013). Sport, recreation, and use of the body were activities where men found refuge in each other within the precarious and violent worlds of enslavement (Lussana, 2016).

Comparing and reducing the Black male athlete to his enslaved ancestors' condition is a prominent narrative that shapes current views of Black people within sports. However, without critical interrogation, what stands to be omitted is how enslaved Africans, mainly enslaved Black men, employed sport and physical activity to resist, form bonds among each other, and successfully organize against their oppression. This remained true in the Jim Crow era of the United States. Black men like E.B. Henderson and Ralph Metcalfe utilized sport, physical activity, and physical education as conduits of social capital and freedom.

Dr. E.B. Henderson is sometimes referred to as the father of Black basketball and physical education. Henderson's stature within basketball, physical education, and sports history should not overshadow the significance of his role as a mentor who used physical activity and sport for Black men to access mainstream society (Henderson, 1952). As a descendant of enslaved Africans, Dr. Henderson's role as mentor fits within a long tradition of Black men using sport to support, guide, and mentor one another through the harsh racial climates of the Americas. Henderson is the first Black male physical education student to attend Harvard's Summer School of Physical Training. In 1904, after completing his first term at Harvard, he became the first Black man to teach physical education in U.S. public schools (Kuska, 2006). In 1906, Dr. Henderson and five schoolteachers in Washington D.C. founded the Interscholastic Athletic Association to promote the well-being of Black students in Washington and Baltimore. Dr. Henderson envisioned that the association would build a pipeline to send Washington D.C.'s best Black student-athletes to northern PWIs.

E.B. Henderson laid the foundation to provide modern physical education to Black youth across the country. He also laid the

foundation for the study of the Black athlete as we know it today. He wrote the first publications on African Americans in sports (Wiggins, 1999). Some of these works included *Famous Colored College Athletes* (Henderson, 1911), published in the *Crisis* in 1911, *The Negro Athlete and Race Prejudice* (Henderson, 1936), which appeared in the 1936 edition of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, and his 1939 book, *The Negro in Sports* (Henderson, 1939). In addition, Henderson connected the Black athlete to broader social issues that impacted Black people within the United States. In his own words:

The path of the Negro athlete is not strewn with roses. He must fight the prejudiced attacks of Negro-haters, whose methods are low and despicable. Fraternities often rule and hamper his efforts so that in nearly all cases where he does win out, his superiority is made evident beyond the slightest doubt. (1911, p. 115)

He framed the Black athlete as a political figure of great significance. Nevertheless, unlike politics, Henderson believed that Black participation in sport was the best weapon for dismantling Jim Crow (Kuska, 2006). In the wake of wartime, Henderson argued that the Black athlete had done more to eradicate racial bigotry in the United States than the soldiers fighting in the Korean War to protect American democracy, a nation “that still remains a hardened of heart and begrudgingly extends full civil liberties to its citizens of color” (Henderson, 1952, p. 199).

It is essential to recognize that Henderson’s scholarship articulated a diasporic view that accounted for Black athletes of various nationalities who were competing throughout the world. In his 1951 article, he made a detailed chart of “colored” athletes of varying nationalities stellar performances at the 1948 London Summer Olympics Games. Henderson stated that “once more, and in larger numbers, colored athletes from America and British territories made marks in the games” (p. 44).

Through a shared history of Blackness, Henderson used physical education and sport to forge diasporic connections among Black athletes. International athletic competitions allowed Black athletes and coaches to form transnational networks. Many found ways to translate those connections into opportunities for Black athletes to migrate to the United States for educational opportunities.

Ralph Metcalfe, like E.B Henderson, utilized his position as a physical education faculty member to provide educational opportunities for Black youth athletes to gain scholarships to complete higher education (McClellan, n.d.; Young, 1938). Ironically, Ralph Metcalfe’s medal-winning performances in the 1932 and 1936 Olympics made him one of the Black Olympians that Henderson adamantly asserted changed the trajectory of the Black American athletic experience (Henderson, 1951). Following his Olympic career, Metcalfe took a job as a track coach and professor of physical education and political science at Xavier University of Louisiana, an HBCU in New Orleans. During his tenure at Xavier, Metcalfe earned a Master’s in physical education from the University of Southern California in 1939 (United States House of Representatives, n.d.). Metcalfe’s move to Xavier was considered risky at the time, given his prominent stature as a former Olympic-winning medalist. Despite the lure of northern White universities, Metcalfe’s decision to coach and teach at a historically Black college was surprising to many (Alpha Phi Alpha, 1970; Young, 1940).

Under Metcalfe’s leadership, Xavier would be the first HBCU to win a relay championship at the Penn Relays and produce its only Olympic medalist (Cassiere, 2010). The Chicago Defender

highlighted Metcalfe’s historic feat at a Black college, which the journalist referred to as “this quartet represented a school of our group in the class A university division of the Penn relays for the first time in the 44 years of that event” (Delay, 1938, p. 1). Leading the winning 440 relay team was future 1948 Olympic bronze medalist Herb Douglas. It was through Metcalfe that Douglas would attend college on a track scholarship. Metcalfe allowed Douglas to attend Xavier University on a track scholarship when his neighborhood institution, the University of Pittsburgh, initially refused him financial aid. Under Metcalfe’s leadership, Douglas, with two other Black Pennsylvanians, William Morton and Clarence Doak, recruited to Xavier by Metcalfe, would shatter the color barrier at the Penn Relays. When reflecting on his time at Xavier, Douglas was quoted, “Xavier started me on my path in life. I learned academics there. I learned religion. I learned how to run” (Finney, n.d., p. 1). Douglas’ comments elucidate the transformational value of Metcalfe’s decision to offer him a scholarship on the trajectory of his life beyond sports. Throughout Metcalfe’s career as a physical educator and coach, he extended Black athletes’ opportunities to achieve upward social mobility. Metcalfe’s commitment to helping Black athletes achieve success was not limited to the United States. While at Xavier, he actively recruited Black Panamanians to join the track team.

Jennings Blackett of Panama, who won gold in the 1938 Central American games, was considered the fastest human alive and was “coming up to New Orleans to go to Xavier under Coach Ralph Metcalfe” (The Pittsburgh Courier, 1938, p. 16). Metcalfe’s ability to recruit Blackett to Xavier changed the trajectory of his life. The 1940 edition of the La Boca yearbook, Blackett’s former junior high school in the U.S. Panama Canal Zone noted him as a distinguished alumnus and “champion sprinter of the last Central American Olympics is now pursuing a course of dentistry at Xavier University in New Orleans” (La Boca School, 1940, p. 19). Within the same yearbook, the graduates also stated being stifled in their progression within the Panamanian educational system due to racial and ethnic prejudice for being Black English-speaking West Indian descendants. Since the mid-19th century, thousands of Black people, mostly hailing from the British West Indies, ventured to Panama to aid in constructing the colossal projects, such as the Panama Canal and the industries that surrounded it (Newton, 1984). They encountered immense racial discrimination, which often manifested as education discrimination and exclusion from meaningful economic or social participation in Panamanian society (Corinealdi, 2012).

Metcalfe’s intentional recruiting of Blackett and the other “sepia boys from Panama” (Young, 1938, p. 9) for athletic purposes allowed them, much like their North American counterparts, to supersede the racial discrimination of their societies. Following Metcalfe’s coaching and teaching career at Xavier, Metcalfe would return to Chicago and become the first African American to head the Illinois Athletic Commission and help organize the 1959 Pan-American Games hosted in Chicago and eventually serve as an alderman in the city. Throughout his public civic career, he actively advanced issues for Black people through physical education and sport (Alpha Phi Alpha, 1970; United States House of Representatives, n.d.).

Figures like Metcalfe and Henderson represent the legacy of Black male precursors who leveraged sport and academia to provide opportunities for other Black people. With the rise of the contemporary athletic industrial complex, the altruistic approach to recruiting and supporting Black male athletes for the benefit of their academic and social development has diminished. Frameworks like William Rhoden’s (2007) conveyor belt



help explicate the mainstream exploitations of Black males through sport.

In the industrial era, the conveyor belt was created as a tool used to transport and transform natural resources as these resources migrated from one place to another. In the era of globalization, conveyor belts have evolved into small segments of a global supply chain that has revolutionized the American economy. Before the creation of this system, only immediate communities benefited from the natural resources within close proximity. However, once conveyor belts and subsequently the global supply chain are introduced to a community on a grand scale, natural resources are not only available to immediate communities, but the world gains access to what were once localized resources.

People in the surrounding areas, regional and national, learned of the value of a local community's natural resources and sought out ways to benefit. Thought to be innocuous, the conveyor belt has been transformed into a system for those with the most power and influence to benefit, leaving the original communities of the natural resources as a function of the system that is less likely to benefit from the value of the resource.

Using the conveyor belt concept, Rhoden's (2007) explains how the misuse of sport and the promise of higher education has exploited Black male athletes while diminishing their benefit to Black communities and institutions. The conveyor belt is a system controlled by White interests that simultaneously deny Black people access to positions of power, isolating young Black males while they are at impressionable ages. In addition, the conveyor belt is a system that exploits Black bodies through manipulation of the mind. The effects of isolation lead to the dulling of race consciousness and communal instincts. Another side effect of the conveyor belt is, for many, the unmet promise of a quality higher education.

Before integration, Black male faculty like Ralph Metcalfe and E.B. Henderson leveraged sport to access education and mainstream resources. However, in the hands of the mainstream sport industrial complex, a byproduct of White racism capitalism (Cooper, 2019), sport becomes a platform for the conveyor belt. Fortunately, there is a budding tradition of Black male support programs that function as pipelines to professoriate to benefit Black males and their communities.

## Reclaiming the Conveyor Belt

In the field of linguistics, the reclaiming of hate speech has been framed as a tool for disarming and dehumanizing oppressive language. Reclaiming occurs when an oppressed or marginalized group appropriates a word or concept to make it less or no longer harmful. Typically, reclaimed words become taboo for people outside of the marginalized group reclaiming the language. For example, *nigga*, *bitch*, and *queer* are pejoratives that at times have been repurposed for the groups they used to oppress (Brontsema, 2004; St Clare, 2018). Here we take the notion of reclaiming oppressive language and apply it to reclaiming an oppressive system, the conveyor belt. Critical concepts in the reclaiming of the conveyor belt are constellation and cascade mentoring. This section explains our conceptualizing of constellation and cascade mentoring, including the notions of fictive kinship and PETE as a mother discipline. As mentioned earlier, the conveyor belt is an exploitative system that swindles Black males for the benefit of educational institutions, but not for Black males to benefit from higher education. For example, a common trope among athletes is that coaches represent father figures; however, in the context of

Rhoden's conveyor belt, coaches are more like plantation patriarchs who benefit from the free labor of student-athletes (Hawkins, 2013; Hicks et al., 2016; Sailes, 1998). This is a perversion of the tradition of fictive kinship within Black communities. Fictive kin are the network of nonbiological family members who support one another within Black communities. For example, in many Black families, we have what are called "play cousins," "play aunts," and "play mothers." These relationships are rooted in the concept of othermothering. Othermothering is a familial relationship among Black women and children whereby a community of mothers plays a role in the rearing of children (Collins, 2000). Otherparentage predates the enslavement of African peoples, but during enslavement was used as a mechanism of survival and educational and cultural transmission. Othermothering can also be described as the feelings of responsibility exuded by Black women to care for all children in Black communities (Case, 1997).

## Kinship

In the proposed framework, otherparentage is not limited to mothering. In our own academic experiences, otherparentage manifested most frequently as academic fathering. Clark (2019) describes how academic otherfathers are catalysts of social capital that allow for the matriculation of Black males to the professoriate through PETE. In the context of a reclaimed conveyor belt, fictive kin operate as a network of academics who provide the social capital and mentorship that undergird a supportive social ecosystem for Black male scholars. Otherfathers could be full and associate professors who have attained a level of social status that allows them to recruit Black males into D-PETE programs while also leveraging their relationships with faculty and graduate students within and outside of their programs. Association with an otherfather respected among his peers and students provides Black males in the doctoral pipeline an inherited reputation.

An otherfather's ability to cultivate caring relationships among graduate students is essential to establishing a healthy academic family. For example, Clark (2019) describes how his academic father practiced a form of critical caring by partnering him with a more experienced graduate student to participate in his first research project. In this way, more senior graduate students become otherbrothers and othersisters who mentor less experienced graduate students. Othersibling relationships support the accelerated learning of Black males who are novices to graduate studies. By working with "older" othersiblings, new graduate students have the opportunity to engage in research, grant writing, and publishing before taking courses that typically prepare them to do so (Clark, 2019). Effective otherfathering provides Black males with a fictive family tree that supports them in graduate school and afterward.

## Cascade and Constellation Mentoring

The provision of an academic family tree through otherfathering fits within the conceptualization of cascade and constellation mentoring. Whereas the fictive kinship serves as an analogy for familial-like relationships that support Black male graduate students, cascade and constellation are metaphors for the structure of the social networks. Conventional mentoring is a dyad relationship between one more experienced person (faculty member) and another less experienced person (graduate student). For many Black graduate students, doctoral studies can be isolating, but with a supportive faculty mentor (i.e., otherfather), feelings of isolation can be mollified. Even more so, this can happen to

graduate students who are included in an expansive network of mentors and mentees.

Cascade mentoring “is a tiered model that connects a senior mentor with a mentee, who then mentors a junior person” (White Paper, 2014). Through this tiered approach, best practices cascade down through the organization or a group as more senior members mentor junior members who become mentors themselves. Cascade mentoring is a vertical social structure that begins with faculty members, then trickles down to include more experienced graduate students who assist in the recruiting, retaining, and accelerating of incoming and novice graduate students. Although we entered doctoral studies 7 years apart, the first and second authors had similar experiences being recruited into the same doctoral program. We were introduced to the work of our academic advisor by our mentors in our separate master’s programs. We met with our advisor during our initial visits to the doctoral program, who introduced us to current Black male graduate students who later became our otherbrothers. It became the responsibility of the current Black male graduate students to recruit incoming students, as they were responsible for leading campus tours and introducing prospective graduate students to other Black students across campus. The early relationships built with otherbrothers catalyzed initial organizational socialization into graduate school (Russell et al., 2016). Cascading permits the transmission of values, practices, and social capital necessary to navigate doctoral studies; it also serves as a communication structure that alerts the network of fictive kin to know each other’s needs, which supports the retention of students. Concerning acceleration, mentioned earlier, otherbrothers who are more senior graduate students may include first-year doctoral students in their scholarly endeavors, which leads to opportunities to publish and present before taking requisite research methods courses. Simultaneously, the “older siblings” are accelerated by mentoring and preparing graduate students while still in doctoral studies. Acceleration is both a social and academic phenomenon providing insights into faculty members’ social quirks, coursework, access to affinity groups, and Black communities unaffiliated with universities.

Constellation (or network) mentoring is similar and can overlap cascade mentoring. Whereas best practices in cascade mentoring flow in a vertical social structure, constellation mentoring occurs as an expansive network similar to a web or clusters of stars. According to Kelly and Dixon (2014), in the constellations mentoring model, “a protege has a network of concurrent mentoring relationships that develop him/ her in different ways” (p. 508). Mentors do not necessarily organize the formation of mentoring clusters. Higgins and Thomas (2001) defined developmental constellations as “the set of relationships an individual has with people who take an active interest in and action to advance the individual’s career by assisting with his or her personal and professional development” (p. 224). They describe constellations as having more than one type of mentor who may be formally or informally assigned. This is similar to the findings from the Boyd et al. (2016) study where faculty were found to occupy various roles for graduate students, including mentor, advisor, sponsor, advocate, and coach. In dyadic relationships, the benefits of otherfathering are short term, whereas, in constellations of fictive kin, the benefits have a more significant influence on the promotion and retention of proteges (Higgins & Thomas, 2001). This is because clusters of mentors can meet the many different needs of graduate students as they progress through their fields of study. It has been shown that Black faculty incur racial taxing as they are obligated to do both university work and racial uplift, which includes mentoring

students who are not in their fields. Constellation mentoring is beneficial to faculty members because it removes the burden of one person being the sole mentor to any one individual (Reddick & Vasquez Heilig, 2012). In many cases, constellations themselves may serve different purposes. When considering PETE as a mother discipline functioning as an access point to several fields, Black male graduate students need an academic family specific to PETE and an academic family that supports their experiences as Black males in higher education.

The combination of kinship, cascades, and constellations are foundational to reclaiming the conveyor belt that reduces the humanity of Black males into athletes—products for usage and consumption of those who benefit from an exploitative educational system (i.e., coaches, fans, apparel brands, and academic institutions; Rhoden, 2007). In a reclaimed conveyor belt, individual fictive kin are the stars within larger constellations of academic families. These families nurture, support, and train scholars who benefit from academic institutions rather than being exploited.

## PETE as Mother Discipline

The PETE programs can serve the purpose of being a constellation that provides access to graduate studies and faculty mentors. In some cases, Black male doctoral students in PETE may not have a research interest directly related to physical education or PETE, but one within the academic lineage of physical education. Since physical education is a mother discipline to most research fields related to sport, physical activity, and health, it can provide a supportive space for students who may be obscure fits for narrowly defined disciplines like kinesiology, biomechanics, sport management, sociology of sport, and sports history, each of which can trace their origins to physical education (Lawson & Kretchmar, 2017; Solmon et al., 2020; Templin et al., 2019; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2011). For example, the first author, who was trained in a D-PETE program, has work experience as a K–12 physical educator and athletic director, but researches race, class, gender, labor migration, nationality, and transnationalism of athletes from the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In some cases, D-PETE programs serve as a home for faculty who mentor and serve as dissertation chairs for Black male scholars in other education fields. For example, the varied disciplinary homes and research interests of 13 doctoral students and past graduates from one of our institutions are presented in Table 1. This example highlights the breadth of the mentoring conducted by these PETE faculty of graduate students across disciplines.

## Discussion

Sport is both a central component of physical education as well as the Black male experience. However, many have argued that an overemphasis on sport within Black communities has led to a deleterious pursuit of sports (Cooper, 2019; Edwards, 2000). Within the proper context, these arguments cannot be dismissed, especially considering the multibillion-dollar industry sport had become, which is disproportionately fueled by the labor of Black males (Runstedtler, 2018)—hence, Rhoden’s (2007) point when he conceptualized the conveyor belt.

However, we declare that by reclaiming the conveyor belt, PETE, as a mother discipline, can alter the nature of a (mis) educational pipeline that values sport more than Black males (Cooper, 2019), and, by full extension, produce a type of D-PETE that centers the histories, experiences, and contributions

**Table 1** Disciplinary Homes and Research Interests of Black Male Doctoral Students and Recent Graduates Mentored by PETE Faculty From One University

Doctoral student	Student's program	Research interest	Mentor's program
Shawn	D-PETE	PETE	PETE
Derrick	D-PETE	Sport	PETE
Broderick	Social studies	Sport	PETE and social studies
Malcolm	Cultural studies	Sport	PETE
Kristian	Cultural studies	Social studies	Social studies
Luke	Cultural studies	PETE	PETE
Tyrone	Higher education	Higher education	Higher education
Damien	Higher education	Higher education	Higher education
Victor	D-PETE	PETE	PETE
Anthony	Higher education	Health education	Health education
Michael	Higher education	Health education	Health education
Malik	D-PETE	PETE	Sport

Note. PETE = physical education teacher education; D-PETE = doctoral PETE.

of Black physical educators (Clark et al., 2020). We reclaim Rhoden's conveyor belt by highlighting the complex nature of power and how individuals and groups navigate and make sense of themselves within educational systems. For example, in our historicization, we framed PETE as a mother discipline, as it has served as the academic birthplace of several related fields. For the first and second authors, it has served as a gestational discipline for their academic careers. Also, we locate ourselves within accomplishments of early trailblazers like E.B. Henderson and Robert Metcalfe—our academic ancestors and recognize that we have benefited from their efforts. Through their work, they were able to transform the lives of many within Black communities throughout the diaspora, in part because disciplinary boundaries did not constrain them. For example, Henderson is known as both a sports historian and is recognized as a PETE professional (Wiggins, 1999), so much so that SHAPE America has an award in his name. Through our experiences in D-PETE, we can embody the spirit and progress of their work.

Without physical education programs, PETE programs, and Black male faculty, we stand to lose future generations of K–12 educators and academics. E.B. Henderson's academic pursuits led him to be the first scholar to have inserted Black athletes as sociopolitical figures within American society. Black scholars that continue to research and advocate for Black athletes owe much of their pedigree to E.B. Henderson's work. Nevertheless, academia can be a challenging place for Black males to succeed. Mentorship has shown itself to positively influence the success of Black males within academia (Kelly et al., 2015). Universities and K–12 schools around the nation must understand the centrality of sport within the Black experience. Black males have historically made it incumbent upon themselves to create communities of fictive kin to foster each other along the way. Their lived experiences as Black males within academia arm them with specific insider perspectives to help incoming Black male scholars. Many of these efforts are not made visible in the mainstream. However, success is realized whenever a Ph.D. is minted to a Black male or a new physical educator graduates from an undergraduate program. The success of bonds and mentorships becomes evident when three men, like ourselves, declare PETE as the mother discipline and recognize the need to continue developing the pipeline we strive to be a part of.

Of consideration should be the recent and historical dismantling of D-PETE programs throughout the United States. Examples include, The University of Texas at Austin, The University of Virginia, Purdue University, University of Michigan, University of Maryland, University of Indiana, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Penn State University, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Florida State University, Rutgers University, University of Southern California, and others (Blankenship & Templin, 2016; van der Mars, 2011). It should be noted that each of these institutions are PWIs that have historically not been equitable access points for Black male education. They have also played a major role in maintaining the exploitative conveyor belt that exploits Black males through athletics (Harper, 2018). In the current neoliberal climate where the vitality of programs is based upon the number of students enrolled, perhaps if these programs had authentically been access points to educate Black males through PETE as much as they have exploited them through athletics, then maybe these programs would have persisted. Despite this D-PETE programs that currently exist have an opportunity to increase their enrollment by attracting Black males and other minoritized people into their programs. Furthermore, it has been argued that HBCUs and other minority serving institutions dedicated to the education of Black males, as they increase their research production are fertile ground for new D-PETE programs (Clark et al., 2016).

## Implications for Research

Although this article is not intended to be empirical, it does offer insights into research pertaining to the survival and diversification of D-PETE. In particular, we hope this manuscript inspires further study of the professional socialization process of Black males in D-PETE, despite socialization being a tangential focus of our paper. For example, the experience of Black males in the D-PETE conveyor belt presents an example of the assertive recruiting of graduate students into the field—a break from the passive tradition (Richards et al., 2021). In our experience, a few Black male PETE faculty members were able to create a large constellation that funneled students into the doctoral pipeline. Further research related to constellation and cascade mentoring may offer insights into the role of doctoral students in recruiting and retaining both



undergraduate and graduate students (Richards et al., 2021). We acknowledge that socialization literature as it pertains to the grooming PETE faculty is predominant. However, it rarely utilizes critical frameworks to understand the socialization of minoritized groups in PETE. As the field engages in socialization scholarship about Black males Johnson et al. (2020) offer the several points of caution: (a) There should not be a focus on individuals or small groups at the expense of the collective Black struggle, (b) the socialization of Black males should not emphasize stereotypic deficit orientations, and (c) the field should clearly define terms (i.e., mentor and role model) when it comes to our understanding of how Black males are socialized into and through PETE. Also noted is the need for unidirectional mentoring whereby protégés mentor their coryphaei.

A theme among the current scholarship emphasizes the role of D-PETE socializing stewards of the profession (Mitchell et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2016). Perhaps the emphasis on the survival and thriving of D-PETE as based on the preparation of stewards of the field is short sighted, rather it may be just as beneficial if not more so for D-PETE to function as a socializing shepherd for students who can benefit from D-PETE but whose ultimate goal is not to serve in D-PETE. Research designed to explore this possibility could change the way we think and function as a field. Said another way, a reimagined D-PETE is one where programs are so good that regardless of identity and disciplinary interest, students in a number of fields will see value in what we do, such that they are willing to join our programs.

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