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Recruitment and Retention of Kindergarten through Grade 12 African American Male Educators in Rural Environments

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Recruitment and Retention of Kindergarten through Grade 12 African American Male Educators
in Rural Environments

Recruitment and Retention of Kindergarten Through Grade 12 African American Male
Educators In Rural Environments

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Administration

by

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ABSTRACT

African American male teachers represent a disproportionately low number of educators in the American public school system. This lack of representation has implications for understanding, interacting with and educating the growing population of students of African descent in public schools. In addition, all students benefit from experiencing African American males in classrooms for cultural and educational reasons. For these reasons, recruiting and retaining African American males for careers in education is imperative.

This dissertation investigated the reasons African American males do not select careers in education given the history of this career and its prominence for people of African descent. Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework, this phenomenological study addressed barriers that African American men may face in pursuing a career in education. Six African American male educators (elementary, middle and high school levels) from three school districts in rural Arkansas were interviewed to ascertain their views on why African American males were not pursuing degrees and careers in education. A qualitative analysis of participant interviews explored economic, academic, social and cultural factors affecting black males in deciding to enter the teaching profession. Specifically, African American males described a lack of positive African American male role models, financial hardship as a deterrent to college enrollment, and expectation of inadequate professional salary. The study focused on five emergent themes that elucidate a more complete understanding of barriers faced by African American male educators: (1) Stereotypes of African American males; (2) Motivations to teach; (3) Barriers faced by African American men in becoming teachers; (4) Specific problems encountered in the classroom; and (5) Encouraging other African American men to teach.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, African American male educators, recruitment, teacher shortage

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my wife, Rita; my son, Adrian; and my parents, Clark and Shirlene.

Thanks to my family and friends for believing in me. I am a accomplished man because of all of you. Thank you for your continued support, love, understanding and patience to complete my journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the National Education Association (National Education Association [NEA], 2009), men make up less than 25% of all teachers in public schools in the United States. That rate is much lower for African American male teachers who, as suggested by Lewis (2006), are verging on extinction in the nation's public school system. Although African American students comprise 20% of the public school student population, African American male teachers make up only 1% of the total public school teacher population (Lewis, 2006). Research has consistently shown that the shortage of African American male teachers is caused by economic, education, social, and cultural factors (Brown & Butty, 1999; Cooper, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Gursky, Rose, & Moss, 2004; Jackson, 2003; Moore, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2003). The economic reasons include low pay, too many years in college for the return on investment, and a larger choice of professions for African Americans that did not exist during previous generations. The education reasons include a poor educational experience in kindergarten through Grade 12, negative experiences at school, and a lack of mentoring while in school. The social and cultural reasons include institutional racism and lack of encouragement (Lewis, 2006). Teaching is seen as an unprofitable job that results in few men choosing this career path. Johnson (2008) pointed out that the number of men teaching in elementary schools is at an all-time low. In 1981, 18% of all elementary teachers in the United States were male (Johnson, 2008). By 2006, the number had dropped by half that amount to 9%. For example, West Clermont, which has 9,000 students in its school district, has only one male kindergarten teacher in the eight elementary schools in the district (Johnson, 2008).

Although many have discussed and written about the recruitment and retention of African American men in education, in nonfiction, fiction, poetry, essays, dissertations, and discussion about the recruitment and retention of African American men, few have captured the experiences of African American men in qualitative research, allowing them to have a voice. Lynn (2001) discusses the role of Black men in urban schools at length, describing their underrepresentation as educators and the gender disparity existing in public schools. Lynn (2001) remarks that while African Americans are one of the most heavily studied cultural groups within American literature, there are few practical suggestions as to how to solve the crisis of disempowerment that so many Black men experience (p. 10).

This study attempts to form groundwork for future research that depict viewpoints from those recurring themes in existing literature by documenting them with a logical approach. By having a greater knowledge of the barriers African American men face when entering the field of education, universities and school districts can work to respond to those barriers. In addition to outlining the struggles, I hope to highlight the barriers of these African American men and make valuable suggestions about how to use these data to improve ways of recruiting and retaining African American male educators.

Many students will never have an African American male teacher while completing their formal education. Though many educational systems publicize the importance of diversity, few achieve this goal. Researchers have concluded that African American students who have an African American teacher have better experiences in education, as noted by their teachers and parents (Clewell & Villegas, 1998; Eubanks, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lahelma, 2000; Matus, 2005).

Background of the Study

Research suggests that the male-teacher shortage trend is increasing (Johnson, 2008; Scelfo, 2009; Snyder, 2008). The NCES (2003) has suggested the shortage of male teachers in elementary and middle schools is influenced by several factors. First, school sexual-abuse scandals may drive men away from teaching in elementary and middle schools, as they may fear they will be wrongly accused (Johnson, 2008; Scelfo, 2009; Snyder, 2008). Often parents and school officials react with suspicion about men who are interested in teaching younger children (Johnson, 2008; Scelfo, 2009; Snyder, 2008). Second, stereotypes are still attached to teaching. If a male is interested in teaching, that interest is more likely to be in a particular subject rather than all the subjects, and elementary school teachers are required to teach all subjects how is this stereotyping? (NCES, 2003). Male teachers account for 37% of the high school teacher population, but African American male teachers account for only 1.7% of the male teachers in high schools (NEA, 2008).

Research supports the tendency of men to gravitate toward higher paying jobs (Gibson, 2007; Hess, 2007). Although pay for teachers remains relatively low in the 21st century, it still has increased by about 19%, adjusting for inflation, since 1981. Hess (2007) reported that although salary is not the only reason African American men do not enter the field, it is one of the top reasons that fewer African American men consider going into the teaching profession. Likewise, Gibson (2007), who has been an African American teacher for more than 5 years, reported that college-educated African American men are driven away from teaching by the poor compensation offered. In fact, Gibson stated that if not a revolutionist at heart, he would not be a teacher either, arguing that salary is less important than the ability to help minority children do better in school.

According to the NEA (2009), states with the highest teacher salaries also have the highest number of male teachers, whereas the lowest-paying states have the fewest. Rumberger (1987) analyzed the relationship between the number of male teachers and salary, comparing the salaries of engineers to those of mathematics and science teachers (jobs that require roughly the same amount of education) and found that salaries for engineers are far greater than they are for teachers. Even so, there are those who question the use of a pay raise as a method for increasing the number of teachers. Carney (2008) warned, “there are 4 million teachers ... [if they were to] give everyone a \$1,000 raise; [they would be] talking about a [huge sum] of money. It just would not work” (para. 6).

Since the 1800s, many reforms in education have taken place. Stricter qualifications have been implemented to secure additional licenses, certifications, and specific specializations (Johnson, 2008). However, even though the requirements to become a teacher has become more difficult, salaries have not increased in relation to the qualifications demanded. During this time period, “rapid economic growth and industrialization flooded the market with new capital wealth and a multitude of highly paid industrial jobs,” and the requirements for jobs “no longer accommodated those who saw teaching as transient work” (Johnson, 2008, para. 11). As Johnson argued, teaching did not provide a salary sufficient to support a family. These historical events set the precedent for today’s shortage of available minority male teachers.

Additionally, there are fewer African American men who attend college and graduate with a degree (Hess, 2007). Hess (2007) reported that the lack of African American male teachers is caused by a racist system still operating in the United States. Hess argued that young African American men are chronically ignored and underestimated in the U.S. education system, and suggested that the achievement gap that separates African American boys from European

American boys comes from a combination of terrible schools, racism, a decline in blue-collar jobs, and the negative circumstances of young African American lives (e.g., low socioeconomic status, violence in their neighborhoods, and dropping out of school early). Researchers have noted that African American male students have traditionally received the most negative treatment by public educators and consequently are underachievers academically (Hess, 2007; Johnson, 2008).

Other issues men have to face when going into the teaching field is that such jobs are seen as “women’s work”; thus, they are viewed as being low in prestige (Snyder, 2008). What is typically seen as masculine characteristics are typically barred from the educational workplace because they are devalued and considered as inappropriate (Lewis, 2006; Scelfo, 2009; Wilson, 2004). Men have to worry about being accused of or suspected of being predators. There are some who believe that men want to teach in elementary schools because they want to target children (Lewis, 2006). One false accusation can destroy a teaching career (Johnson, 2008).

Throughout history, teaching in the African American community has been viewed as a prestigious and honorable profession. African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s usually attended historically Black colleges and universities and studied to become teachers. In most cases, after completing their studies, many African American male teachers went back to their towns or communities to serve the educational needs of the African American community (Lewis, 2006). African American male educators served not only as teachers, but also as counselors, role models, and spiritual leaders in the education setting and community. Since 1970, the research plainly documents that the representation of African American male teachers is not growing commensurately with the ratio of African American students in U.S. public schools.

Research Question

The following research question guides this qualitative study: What barriers may prevent African American men from entering the teaching field, in rural impoverished areas? The research question was developed based on critical race theory (CRT), the theoretical framework for this study, which can be used to understand why African American men who graduate from college may not be interested in entering the professional teaching arena. CRT examines the personal experiences of African American male teachers and considers their first-hand accounts. While preparing to conduct research on the barriers that prevent African American men from entering the teaching field, I considered which methodology to select. Having experienced some of these barriers [how do you know which barriers the study participants will indicate?] firsthand, I was not sure whether I was ready to explore my personal experience on a deeper level. I had not experienced many African American male educators; why would I want to address this question now?

While attending Harmony Grove High School there were no African American male educators in the school. At Southern Arkansas University, I had the opportunity to be in the presence of two male professors of African descent and was able to engage in many conversations about their careers and struggles as they progressed.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to answer the question, What barriers may prevent African American men from entering the teaching field, especially in rural, impoverished areas? This study will be used to add to the literature on the shortage of minority male teachers in the K–12 American school system, focusing on rural, impoverished areas. Many studies have been conducted on the shortage of male teachers (Martino, 2008; Mills, Martino, & Lingard, 2004;

Toppo, 2003; Snyder, 2008). Few studies exist, however, that take a phenomenological approach to the topic in which a voice is given to African American men who have purposely chosen to teach in rural, impoverished areas, where the salaries they receive are likely to be less than those in more highly populated, urban areas.

Significance of the Study

America is becoming a more culturally diverse country. As a more diverse student population enters the U.S. school system, it becomes increasingly important that these students have teachers of every ethnicity to provide them with effective role models (Lewis, 2006; Okezie, 2003; Wilson, 2004). A lack of male teachers is potentially detrimental to the mental or educational stimulation of students (Okezie, 2003; Snyder, 2008). Although much research has been conducted on the shortage of minority male teachers and the shortage of male teachers in general, there have been only a few studies that have used a qualitative approach on this topic, interviewing African American teachers now working in a school system (Carney, 2008; Clewell & Villegas, 1998; Cooper, 2000; Eubanks, 2001; Gibson, 2007; Gursky, 2002; Lahelma, 2000; Matus, 2005; & Rumberger, 1987).

Additionally, little research has been focused on how African American male teachers make their decisions to teach in rural, impoverished areas. Such information will be quite valuable to administrators in poor, rural school districts where minority populations are high, supporting changes in the way school districts recruit African American men to teach. This is especially important in states like Arkansas where there are many rural and impoverished school districts with high populations of minority students. These students need to see people who are similar to them as role models, to know what can be achieved by attending school and studying hard.

Statement of the Problem

The general problem is a significant lack of male minority teachers in the United States. The specific problem is that there is a lack of African American male teachers in rural, impoverished areas. Interviewing African American male teachers employed in rural, impoverished areas will add to the body of literature on African American male teachers by giving a voice to those who have elected to do what others have chosen not to do: to teach where African American male teachers are most needed.

Phenomenology

This study uses a phenomenological approach. Groenewald (2004) details the process of how phenomenological research is conducted. Phenomenology was made accessible by Husserl in the twentieth century (Vandenberg, 1997). Husserl stated that personal consciousness is the only authentic reality, and thus phenomenal in nature. “Phenomenology is the interpretive study of human experience” (Seamon, 2000, para 5). Lived experiences are examined to better understand personal perspectives on society and psychology, while retaining value of the facts (Groenewald, 2004, p. 5). Phenomenology assumes that the researcher has definite biases and attachments to the study which should be acknowledged (Groenewald, 2004, p.7).

Once a research paradigm has been selected, Groenewald (2004) indicates that a method must be chosen to locate research participants. Participants should be made aware of the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, and confidentiality of the research, as well as their right to cease participation at any time (Groenewald, 2004, p. 10). Data can be gathered from various sources, such as discussion, essays and interviews. Groenewald (2004) emphasizes the importance of choosing three different informational sources in order to allow the data to be validated by means of triangulation (p. 11).

Groenewald (2004) identifies three data-gathering methods: (1) interviews; (2) memoing; and (3) essays (p. 14). Interviews allow an exchange of ideas and perspective between the participants and researcher. ‘Memoing’ refers to field notes compiled from the researcher’s thoughts and experiences during and after the data collection. Essays offer a written counterpoint to the auditory method of interviewing, and allow the participants to take more time gathering their thoughts on the given subject.

Interviews should be carefully organized and identified by an assigned code and date. There are four types of field notes that can be utilized during the interview process: (1) observational notes; (2) theoretical notes; (3) methodological notes; and (4) analytical memos (Groenewald, 2004, p. 15). The compilation of field notes helps the researcher recall details of the interviews and avoid bias through generalization.

The phenomenological research in this study employs the use of a 5-step explication process to identify and understand relationships within the data. First, the researcher must bracket preconceived ideas or beliefs. Second, units of meaning are identified and extracted from the interviews. Third, themes are formed by bringing together similar units of meaning and significance. Fourth, all of the interviews must be summarized and verified. Fifth, themes both generalized and specific are illuminated within the interviews and a composite summary is stated (Groenewald, 2004, p. 18-21). The 5-step explication process was used to create a template of study to properly research African American male teachers in a systematic and authentic manner that illuminated common themes.

Critical Race Theory

The theoretical framework used for the present study is CRT. CRT is a venue for “naming your reality,” and the voices that emerge from the research offer insight and value to

social construction, self-preservation, and ways those who are listening can overcome ethnocentrism (Ladson-Billings, 2009). CRT began as a way of looking at how laws in the United States were evolving to promote or prevent racial equality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT offers a theoretical and analytical framework designed to explain how educational structures, practices, and opportunities are shaped by race, racism, and power (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This study follows the groundwork set by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) to use CRT in education in order to provide a framework to understand the racial inequalities that exist in education. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) stated that race in education was under-theorized. By using CRT as a theoretical and analytical framework, education scholars are able to conduct antioppressive research that explores the contextual history of race and racism. CRT also recognizes the cross sections of racism, sexism, and poverty (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995).

Currently, CRT is used in many disciplines to look at how race relations may influence the workings of any institution. Education research began to use CRT frequently, and a set of CRT tenets specific to education was developed (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). CRT formed the work of legal scholars over the last 40 years, and in the last 20 years education scholars have used CRT's concepts, tenets, and epistemological assumptions to inform their scholarship (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Critical Race Theory in education begins with the premise that race and racism are endemic and permeate all aspects of society, including educational structures and policies (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

CRT supports the concept of microaggression that can be viewed as the real way race is viewed in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Microaggression has been defined as subtle and commonplace exchanges that let minorities know they are not equal (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2001). According to hooks (1994), these microaggressions are quite visible in the American educational system where minorities are placed in inadequately funded schools and where the education they receive is subpar when compared with schools where there is a high population of White children. These microaggressions send subtle messages to people of color that they are in some way “less equal.” In our, “racialized society where whiteness is positioned as normative, *everyone* is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of opposition” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 19). Consequently, White students are awarded the privilege of being *normal*, and everyone else is left at the margins. Educators hold the power to create a classroom environment that is conducive to the educational success of the diversity of students found within the school.

DeCuir and Dixson (2004), Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002), and Ladson-Billings (2005) posited that there are five tenets that make up the CRT framework: counterstorytelling, permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, interest conversion, and the critique of liberalism. These tenets can be used to explain the framework of CRT and how it affects education.

Counterstorytelling is used to legitimize the racial and subordinate experiences of marginalized groups. Counterstorytelling can be used to give a voice to faculty, staff, and students of color in order that their narratives of being marginalized can be told. Similar to counterstorytelling is portraiture, “a qualitative method that blends art, science and social critique to story the lives of racially subordinate peoples” (Lynn, 2001, p. ix). Counterstories can be used to analyze the climate of a college campus, providing opportunities for research on how racial issues can be eliminated in higher education and thus make it a more accepting environment for African American males seeking their teaching degrees (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2005).

Permanence of racism explains how racism controls the political, social, and economic life of the United States (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2005). If higher education ignores the permanence of racism, the implementation of diversity plans is likely to be ineffective. Thus, established institutional processes and procedures that promote racism need to be examined and revised or eliminated (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2005).

The third tenet is Whiteness as property. Because racism is embedded in American society, Whiteness can be considered a form of “property” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2005). The way this notion operates is that White people in society are given the right of possession, the right to use and enjoy, the right to disposition, and the right of exclusion (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2005). The tenet of Whiteness as property manifests in the design and ownership of academic curriculum. Employing fewer African American male teachers means that there is less curriculum designed from their perspective. Hiraldo (2010) argues that this reinforces the idea that people of color are not as important as White people (p. 55).

The fourth tenet, interest convergence, acknowledges that White individuals are the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2005). DeCuir and Dixson (2004) argued that “early civil rights legislation provided only basic rights to African Americans, rights that had been enjoyed by White individuals for centuries. These civil rights gains were in effect superficial ‘opportunities’ because they were basic tenets of U.S. democracy” (p. 28). The people who have benefited most from affirmative action have been White women, according to Ladson-Billings (2005). Ladson-Billings (2005) also suggested that because White women potentially support

households where White men and children live, affirmative action ultimately benefits White individuals in general. Hence, Ladson-Billings (2005) argued that White people benefit from legislation that was initially implemented to offer equal opportunity to people of color.

The fifth tenet of CRT, critique of liberalism, comes from the ideas of neutrality of the law and equal opportunity for all (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2005). In the United States, however, the role of racism has ensured that rights and opportunities are both conferred and withheld based exclusively on race. The idea is that the law is supposed to be colorblind and neutral. Unfortunately, “colorblindness” is used to help people ignore racist policies that perpetuate social inequality.

In this study, CRT will be used to understand the lived experiences of African American men who teach. As DeCuir and Dixson (2004) noted, CRT as a framework in education is fairly new and has only been used to support two of the tenets of CRT: counterstorytelling and permanence of racism. This research will focus on counterstorytelling while examining the other tenets of CRT.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this study is CRT with an emphasis on counterstorytelling narratives. Counterstories can serve at least four theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical functions: (a) they can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice; (b) they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society’s center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems; (c) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; and (d) they can teach others that by combining elements

from both the story and the current reality, thereby constructing another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

CRT challenges the status quo (see Figure 1, the tenets). “As a form of oppositional scholarship, CRT challenges the experience of whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color” (Taylor, 1998, p. 122). The introverted way to understand what oppression looks like, and how it feels to be oppressed, is to listen to the stories of those facing the experience (Wise, 2009).



Figure 1. Critical race theory. This is a diagram created by the researcher that shows how a issue goals within the 5 tents of CRT and comes out as a analyzed isse.

Definition of Terms

African American male educators. Any classroom teacher who is both male and of African American decent.

Beginning teacher. Teacher with less than 10 years’ experience.

Retention Programs. For the purposes of this study, this term refers to programs designed to ensure that minority male teachers remain in their teaching positions.

Rural environment. Geographic locations, territories, and populations in areas that are not considered urban or suburban.

Suburban. Located in or characteristic of a suburb.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Due to their scarcity, male teachers with a minority heritage are aggressively recruited in today's teaching field. According to Gursky (2002), the shortage of male teachers is "most problematic in urban environments, where the challenge of reaching students has become more difficult for teachers who are often cultures and generations removed from their students" (p. 31). Teachers of all races find it increasingly difficult to deal with students, and leave the field at alarming rates. Others may simply migrate to another school, but the loss is still felt schoolwide by the students. Men are desired in the field because many children today have no male role model at home. Making a Difference for America's Youth (2008), an organization comprised of parents, teachers, administrators, and policymakers concerned with educating American children noted the following:

- Boys often fall behind girls in elementary school, which leads to higher dropout rates and juvenile delinquency, and they often show signs of behavioral problems early in life.
- Boys are at greater risk than girls for developing learning disabilities, illiteracy, dropping out of school, substance-abuse problems, violence, juvenile arrest, and early death caused by violent behavior.
- Studies show an overwhelming number of violent criminals in the United States are males who grew up without fathers involved in their lives. (para. 7)

Research confirms that a shortage of male teachers affects boys in unexpected ways. One study that examined students in kindergarten through fifth grade, found that there were three to four times more boys than girls with reading problems (Hutchings et al., 2008; Johnson, 2008; Jones, 2007; Lahelma, 2000; Mancus, 1992; Marsh, Martin, & Cheng, 2008; Martino, 2008; Milloy, 2003; Mills, Martino, & Lingard, 2004, Sommers, 2013). An absence of male role models in the classroom can result in boys having shorter attention spans (Jones, 2007; Lahelma,

2000). Male teachers offer “a valuable cultural connection that could inspire some kids to learn more and better” (Milloy, 2003, para. 4). The lack of male teachers in the lives of male students means that these students will not have a role model. When African American male students do not see African American male teachers in their lives, they grow up and do not become teachers. Because boys as men rarely become teachers, the next generation of boys may not receive that one positive role model in their life. NEA President Weaver noted that male students may never encounter African American teachers during their academic careers (Milloy, 2003, para. 5). Besides the emotional toll a lack of minority male teachers take on students, there is a tendency for minority students to have higher absentee rates and to be less involved in school when there are no minority male teachers (Snyder, 2008).

Reasons Men Do Not Teach

In 2006, men accounted for only one fourth of all teachers (NEA, 2009), and in 2006, the number of male public school teachers hit an all-time low (Snyder, 2008). According to Snyder (2008), there are several reasons why men in general eschew teaching as a profession, including low status and low pay. Additionally, teaching has been stereotyped as “women’s work,” especially at the elementary school level (Snyder, 2008).

Rasmussen (1999) reported that recruiting teachers is hard. However, this effort has been made more difficult by the fact that successful minority high school and college students, as well as the wider public, often regard teaching as a low-paying, low-prestige job. With both pride and salary at stake, many men refuse to take a chance on teaching. The number of minority teachers has declined in recent years, and many education experts say it is because there have been growing opportunities in more lucrative fields that were not as open in the past to people of color (Lee, 2003). More male minorities are going into professions such as law, medicine,

psychology, and especially business. These fields hold more fringe benefits and offer higher salaries.

School/Education

School is a significant predetermining factor in whether men or minorities choose to teach. Extensive research demonstrates that one of the principal factors contributing to the underrepresentation of African American men in college, as well as their underperformance in primary and secondary school, is the absence of male role models in education (Education Commission of the States, 2003). Simply by virtue of their social status in elementary and secondary schools, African American children have a smaller likelihood of getting into college. Boys in elementary and high school receive two thirds of all failing grades (Education Commission of the States, 2003).

Men make up less than half of the national college/university population—just 44% (Mills et al., 2004; NCES, 2007). Government figures show that in the last 20 years the number of bachelor's degrees earned by women increased 77%, compared with only a 19% increase for men. Although the number of minority students earning bachelor's degrees steadily increased during the 1990s (American Council on Education, 2010), and minorities as a group earned about 21% of all bachelor's degrees in 2000, African American students received only 8.7% of degrees. With a smaller percentage of people with the degree necessary to teach, there is an even lower percentage of people who will go in the teaching field.

Another reason men stay out of teaching is the low salaries. “The national average public schoolteacher salary for 2007-2008 was \$52,308. State average public schoolteacher salaries ranged from those in California (\$64,424), New York (\$62,332) and Connecticut

(\$61,976) at the high end, to South Dakota (\$36,674), North Dakota (\$40,279) and Utah (\$41,615) at the low end” (NEA, 2008, para. 4).

Many men do not bother to consider teaching because they do not believe they have nurturing skills. On the other end of the spectrum, they have to worry about being too soft. If men exhibit too much tenderness or too many feminine traits, they have the concern of parents or others calling them homosexual. Consider this account:

Last fall Justin Smith, a first-grade teacher in North Kansas City, Missouri, told the mother of one of his students that he'd be happy to tie a scarf on the child's Halloween costume. A few hours later, the principal notified Smith that the mother had requested her son be pulled from the class because she didn't want her child "taught by a homosexual." (Scelfo, 2009, p. 44)

Smith is married and straight. However this stigma is not unusual for many male teachers. This factor is a great hurdle to the pride of many men, especially minority men who are trying to cope with being different from the workers around them. Perhaps the greatest problem male teachers have to face is that grown men who express physical affection for small children can be accused of being pedophiles. Rather than going through accusations of sexual abuse, most men choose to avoid the issue by not going into the teaching field (Snyder, 2008).

Benefits of Recruiting African American Male Teachers

Researchers have repeatedly noted that there is a great need in the American education system to recruit and maintain minority male teachers (Clewell & Villegas, 1998; Kam, Dandy, & Hoffman, 2007; Learning Point Associates, 2006; Lucas & Robinson, 2002; Robinson, Paccione, & Rodriguez, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The reasons African American male teachers are important in the classroom are many, but the most significant reason is that American school students are increasingly members of ethnic minorities who need to see others of their ethnicity in roles of authority.

Nationally, minority teachers represent 14% of the teaching population in America, whereas minority students compose 36% of classrooms (National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse, 2006). If the number of minority teachers does not increase during the early part of this century, only 5% of teachers will be minorities, whereas the student minority population will be 40% (NCES, 2007). By the year 2025, at least half the student population will be minorities; meanwhile, only 13% of their teachers will be minorities (NCES, 2007).

According to the NCES (2005), the greater portion of America will be non-White by 2050. Thus, multicultural teachers, teachers with different ethnic backgrounds, teachers of different colors, and male teachers are needed to provide an adequate representation of this vastly changing and ethnically diverse school system. There are many places where schools and neighborhoods are still segregated. However, society is desegregating and becoming more multicultural, increasing the need for minority teachers to be recruited to teach in American's public schools. As Eubanks (2001) argued,

Collectively, teachers at a school bring a full range of skills, perspectives, teaching styles, and characteristics to their classrooms. The more differences a child is exposed to, the better off he will be. Research tells us how a teacher relates with her students is one of the critical factors to how a student learns. When a school has a diverse workforce, chances are each student will have one or more teachers who can directly impact a particular student; a teacher who knows how to inspire a child to succeed. (para. 10)

Learning Point Associates (2006) pointed out that there are two important policy strategies for recruitment of minority male teachers: creating more efficient hiring procedures and offering incentives. Streamlining hiring procedures can help African American male teachers coordinate their teacher-completion programs with hiring deadlines. Some school districts have implemented incentive programs such as offering home loans or help with mortgages and closing costs, and others have offered signing bonuses or increased starting

salaries. However, these programs have often failed to retain the very teachers they were implemented to retain (Hutchings et al., 2008).

At-risk schools often have high populations of racial/ethnic minority students and need quality teaching staff (Clewell & Villegas, 1998; Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004). As research has shown, these at-risk schools generally have fewer highly qualified teachers with less teaching experience and are more likely to leave their schools than teachers in other schools. The inability to retain teachers impacts students' academic progress (Clewell & Villegas, 1998; Torres et al., 2004).

Second, recruitment has become necessary to meet standards set by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Research has shown that African American male teachers are a component of providing every child with a quality education (Lucas & Robinson, 2002). School districts such as the Alamance-Burlington School System in North Carolina have made recruiting minority teachers a priority. The district leaders wrote, "Increasing the numbers of minority teachers is an invaluable tool in providing positive role models for children. The intrinsic value of being taught by qualified and competent teachers who are culturally and racially diverse benefits the whole student population" (Learning Point Associates, 2006, p. 9).

Because African American male teachers can relate to students with diverse backgrounds, their recruitment is very important. Additionally, because many teachers tend to live and work in areas where they grew up, it is important to invest in high-quality local teachers, particularly African American male teachers who come from and build their lives in at-risk communities (Fenwick, 2001; Learning Point Associates, 2006). Research suggests that relationships with teachers are very important to African American students, but they do not experience personalization of relationships with teachers to the same extent that White students do. These

relationships are measured by how often students talk to teachers outside class (Fenwick, 2001; Learning Point Associates, 2006).

Minority male teachers tend to have higher expectations for their minority students, less frequently misdiagnosed special-education students, and fewer minority-student disciplinary issues. According to research, expectations play a significant role in helping students reach a higher standard in their academic progress (Kam et al., 2007). Too often students of color have been expected to achieve less, cause more problems, and show less interest in school. When minority students have teachers of any color who set high standards for them, students tend to rise to those expectations (Kam et al., 2007).

Based on the research of Kam et al. (2007), there is a connection between the presence of African American male teachers in the classroom and the academic success of minority students. Therefore it stands to reason that preparing, hiring, and supporting African American male teachers will help encourage minorities to enter the teaching profession. All students and teachers, regardless of their race or ethnicity, need exposure to people and leaders of various cultural backgrounds. Recruiting African American teachers is a strategy with the purpose of helping all students live in a multicultural, global society (Robinson et al., 2003).

Regardless of race, advocates believe it is important for boys to have male role models. Many African-American homes do not have father figures (Brockenbrough, 2011). When boys grow up with only a mother or a grandmother, they need adult men in their lives. Many times, the only male influence African American students may receive is from a teacher (Torres et al., 2004).

The NEA (2009) reported a need for male minority teachers because research has shown when minority men are absent from the classroom more minority students get assigned to

special-education classes, have higher absentee rates, and participate less in extracurricular activities. Minority male teachers can serve as role models for all students and help provide mentoring, especially for children who may not have an involved father in their lives. As the NEA (2009) suggested, there are not enough minority male teachers to make an impact on the majority of the school-age population. The recruitment of minority male teachers is an important prerequisite for teachers to match their students in diversity, and because social justice demands minority men be recruited into the teaching profession (NEA, 2009).

Why It Is Difficult to Recruit Male Minorities

Anti-affirmative-action legislation makes it harder to recruit male minorities in the teaching field. NCLB has caused much distress for many teachers. The education standards for teachers are becoming increasingly advanced. The United States Department of Education (2012) found that 52% of public school teachers in 2008 possessed a master's or higher degree (para. 3). Stringent requirements under NCLB could intimidate minority and male candidates. Although NCLB requires every teacher to be highly qualified in every subject they teach, it is unlikely schools will increase salaries or working conditions for teachers. NCLB requires additional coursework and certification that teachers must provide themselves.

Futrell (1999) argued there are many reasons it is difficult to recruit minority male teachers, but that the most difficult factor for minority men to overcome is their lack of academic preparation. African American and Hispanic students are less likely to be placed in gifted and talented programs in elementary schools or advanced-placement courses in high school. Although minority male students are capable of succeeding, few schools attempt to place them into those programs. Instead, minority male students are overrepresented in vocational or

special-education classes and underrepresented in gifted or academically advanced classes. Hence, minority men start out from a disadvantaged position.

Futrell (1999) suggested that minority males are more likely to attend school districts in poor areas that do not have as much money to hire qualified and certified teachers. Those minority men who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds fail to acquire the adequate academic background, skills, and knowledge that will help them achieve success in college. Poor academic preparation means minority students will not do as well on entry tests to college or meet the requirements for state teacher certification. An increase of African American teachers within these schools could help motivate young minority students.

If a minority male is successful in college, it is likely that teaching may not be his chosen profession because the money offered to teachers cannot match what a successful minority male could earn in the corporate or scientific world (Futrell, 1999). Ironically, the salary offered to a beginning teacher does not offset the cost of being educated to become a teacher. Minority men who have spent much money in attaining a 4-year degree may not want to take a job that pays as little as a beginning teacher position does (Futrell, 1999).

Gursky (2002) reported one of the problems in recruiting minority male teachers is the gap in passing rates on PRAXIS examinations that all teachers must take before they can be certified to teach. Passing rates nationwide are 82% for White and 46% for African American applicants. Additionally, minority men who are successful in college are often recruited for jobs other than teaching, especially if they have majored in mathematics or science. The salaries offered to these successful male minority graduates far exceed what minority men could earn as school teachers for at least 10 years (Gursky, 2002).

Okezie (2003) reported that African American men do not enter the teaching field for several important reasons:

1. The watered-down education that minority students receive in elementary and secondary schools;
2. Strong competition from nonteaching professions that offer higher salaries and better status to top graduates;
3. The increase in testing requirements in many states, which effectively discourages some minority men (those adversely affected by tests) from pursuing teaching careers;
4. And the heavy reliance on loans in college financial aid packages. (para. 5–7)

Recruiting African American Male Teachers

There are several ways to recruit male minorities in the teaching field, and a few states have taken a special interest in this movement. Some public school teachers in North Carolina are offered loan forgiveness after spending a few years in the field. Teaching hospitals (or the public school equivalent), formally called “professional development schools,” have been established by cities such as Denver, Colorado; Jacksonville, Florida; and Columbus, Ohio.

These cities work with universities to create qualities with the intention of appealing to minorities (NEA, 2009). Cunningham and Watson (2002) discuss the important role staff development plays in encouraging staff to keep an open mind about gender roles within teaching:

With a welcoming environment in place, administrators can focus on recruitment. Successful strategies include writing “men encouraged to apply” in advertisements, advertising strategically in publications read by men such as the newsletter of a men’s group, using word of mouth, offering cash incentives for staff who recruit male staff, extending personal invitations to men to apply, and establishing a résumé bank of potential male applicants (p. 10).

There are also alternative programs (NEA, 2009) that, though not directly centered on minorities, are used frequently by minorities to enter the teaching field. Teach for America sends new college graduates into inner-city school districts. By going through Teach for America, one can obtain a degree in a desired field other than education and still teach. Troops-

to-Teachers recruit former military personnel into the education field. “Private foundations, including the Ford Foundation and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, have devoted more than \$100 million to helping recruit and keep minority teachers in the public-education system” (Toppo, 2003, para. 26).

Programs Created to Recruit Male Minorities

Many programs have been implemented to recruit men and male minorities into the teaching field. However, certain states have had no methods for recruiting men into the education field. As of January 2003, the State of Maryland had no specific policies on recruiting male teachers into the classroom (Education Commission of the States, 2003). A brief list of programs specifically designed to recruit men or male minorities is the following: Men Equipped to Nurture (MEN), Veterans in Public Service or Veterans in Public Schools, They Call me MISTER (Men Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models), and Troops-to-Teacher.

Bowie State University’s School of Education in partnership with Maryland, operating in the Prince George’s County school district, has established MEN, a specialized teacher-education program aimed at recruiting and training men as teachers in urban settings. This teacher-education program attracts and retains male teachers, focusing predominantly on African American men along with other minorities. Of the 135,000 students in the Prince George’s County school district, the majority—77%—are African-American, whereas fewer than 25% of teachers are male and 75% are White. Men Equipped to Nurture covers the cost of educational classes needed to prepare for the national teacher certification test and pays for the test itself (Chmelynsky, 2005).

The MEN program’s goals were to accomplish the following activities during the 2004–2005 academic year:

- Financial assistance for courses (content area/and or pedagogy) related to the participants' certification needs;
- Registration for Praxis assessment with instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics;
- Use of a laptop for academic and classroom tasks;
- Monthly meetings from experts in the field and community leaders;
- Mentoring guidance; and
- Peer support. (Chmelynsky, 2005, p. 56)

Veterans from the Vietnam-era receive a substantial stipend, free tuition, and a generous book allowance when they graduate and take jobs as teachers. The veterans received special inducements that encouraged them to decide to teach in elementary schools, specifically inner-city public elementary schools. This program was created about 35 years ago and benefited more Black and male teachers when they were more common than at present (Chmelynsky, 2005).

Only 150 Black male teachers work in all of South Carolina public elementary schools (Chmelynsky, 2005). Many historically Black colleges, along with Clemson University, created a partnership in 1999, which became The Call me MISTER Program. The Call me MISTER program's overall goal is to recruit, train, certify, and secure the employment of 200 Black men as elementary teachers in South Carolina. Call me MISTER has had 15 successful Black male graduates who are currently teaching in South Carolina's public schools (Chmelynsky, 2005).

Troops-to-Teachers does not exclusively concentrate on men or minorities. This program, however, is relevant because men and minorities make up 80% and African Americans make up 25% of the program. Of the teachers, 90% stay in high-need schools for their 2nd year and 75% stay in the high-need schools for their 3rd year. The government locates separated troops and encourages them to consider teaching as an option. When the troops agree, the

government provides them with all the requirements to become a teacher, including distance learning, counseling, and obtaining a teaching license. Troops-to-Teachers receives money from NCLB (NCES, 2007).

Nweke, Afolabi, Stewart, Stephens, and Toth (2004) reported some successful programs that have been used to recruit and retain minority male teachers:

1. A program in the Detroit Public School system gives Black male adults incentives to change careers. The program recruits high school students; those with some college but no career plans; and others with undergraduate degrees but no teacher training or certification in the teaching profession (Moorlehem, 1998, as cited in Nweke et al., 2004).
2. Recommendations from the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males (2003, as cited in Nweke et al., 2004) to the Indiana General Assembly that legislation should be passed:
 - a. Creating alternative certification programs for Black men who have a college degree outside of education who want to enter the teaching profession;
 - b. Allowing on-the-job training while receiving accreditation; and
 - c. Providing funding for scholarship programs to encourage Black male students to prepare and enter a career in teaching.
3. The Bay Area Male Involvement Network in California offers a male-involvement curriculum for the training of teachers in early-childhood education.
4. MenTeach is a recruitment program for men in early and elementary education.
5. The *Black Collegian Magazine* Teaching Scholarship is a program for Black men who are majoring in elementary education.

Nweke et al. (2004) suggested it will take even more concerted efforts to increase minority male teachers. Fifty percent of all Black men who start Grade 9 drop out before Grade 12. Because so few minority men graduate from college there is a smaller pool of candidates available for teaching. In fact, Black men make-up only 6% of college graduates. Hence, programs to address the shortages in minority teachers must begin as early as the elementary school level. Because the largest number of Black men drop out of school after Grade 9, an effort must be made to better prepare these young minority students with the skills they will need to successfully navigate through high school. As Nweke et al. (2004) stated, “The data suggests focused interventions should begin in middle school for male students to ensure academic and social readiness for success and retention in high school and, subsequently, in college” (p. 9). Retention programs that start in college are too late to make a difference for many minority students. Programs and incentives must be started early in minority students’ education to ensure there will be sufficient numbers of minority candidates to teach.

Just How Rare Are the Men/Minority Teachers?

During the 1999-2000 school year, only 62% of public schools in the United States had minority teachers on staff (Toppo, 2003, para. 16). The U.S. had 24 percent of its teachers being male in 2009 (NEA, 2009). According to the United States Department of Education (2012), only 7% of those male teachers identified as Black or Hispanic (para. 4). The NEA (2012) estimates that minority students comprise 40 percent of the public school population, while minority teachers are only 5 percent (para. 2). NEA (2009) figures showed that in 1971 they accounted for 55% of high school teachers, and in 2005 their presence dropped to 41%. If male teachers are uncommon, African American male teachers and male teachers of any minority

group are even rarer. A scant 2.4% of the nation's 3 million K–12 public school teachers are Black men (Toppo, 2003).

The Legacy of the Black Male Teacher

A legacy is defined as “Something handed down from an ancestor or a predecessor or from the past” (Legacy, n.d.). The legacy of the Black male teacher is observed in the particular attributes that have defined him in public schools. Charged with the task of setting a positive example for African American students, his actions resonate within the existing void of minority educators. He is noted for presenting himself as a role model with professionalism, cultural sensitivity, and dedication. Often serving multiple functions as teacher and sports coach, he is known for his role as a disciplinarian. Black male teachers have the opportunity to address racial inequality within their classrooms.

In the foreword of Foster's (1997) *Black Teachers on Teaching*, Lisa Delpit states that while many historians believe that Blacks desired access to White culture and teachers to properly educate their children, “The real reason for the school desegregation struggle was to gain the economic benefits and resources for black children that were commonly provided for white children” (p. ix). The issue of school desegregation divided the Black community. In many circumstances, integration resulted in Black teachers losing their jobs to White counterparts. This presented a barrier to African American male teachers seeking jobs, and an additional obstacle to those already in the field of education. As a young, Black, female teacher in the North, Foster (1997) was unable to secure a permanent teaching position until 1974, when Boston was issued a court order to desegregate public schools.

The primary reason that black teachers were prohibited from teaching white children was the widespread belief firmly entrenched since the nineteenth century that, like others of their race, black teachers were inferior to whites and not suitable to teach white pupils (Foster, 1997, p. xxix).

In order to gain a multi-dimensional perspective of how society, culture, and personal experiences have developed over time, Foster (1997) interviewed twenty Black teachers and divided them into three groups: (1) the elders; (2) the veterans; and (3) the novices. Five of the participants were Black men. “Elders” were classified as teachers who taught before and after school desegregation, while the criteria for “veterans” included teachers who had many years of experience teaching in the classroom. As an “elder,” Leroy Lovelace won a partial scholarship to attend a private school for Blacks, since public school only served the Black community through tenth grade (Foster, 1997). He recounts being at a disadvantage in college because of the lack of reading and writing opportunities as a Black high school student. After deciding to become an English teacher, Lovelace devoted his time to reading and studying the books he had raced through in college.

For 36 years, Lovelace taught at an urban high school in Chicago, serving students within the housing projects. He proudly won the award for “Teacher Who Demanded Most of Students” (Foster, 1997, p. 48).

Too many teachers give up too quickly. Teaching anywhere today is hard work. It’s especially hard in the cities because there are so many forces out there fighting against you: gangs, drugs, and peers. But teachers just have to keep working at it. If not, then they will be forced to give up. I had too much pride in myself, too much pride in the profession to give up (Foster, 1997, p. 49).

Lovelace (Foster, 1997) states that one of the biggest problems facing education is the fact that American society is simply not interested in educating everyone. More money is spent on prisons than school taxes. He believes that Black people must take the initiative to advocate for education, rather than leaving it in the hands of predominantly White school boards. Lovelace argues that “Education is learning how to think critically. When a people can think critically,

they can change things. They are less likely to be taken advantage of and more likely to be able to avoid the traps that others set for us” (Foster, 1997, p. 52).

Edouard Plummer was interviewed by Foster (1997) for his role as a “veteran” teacher. He attributes his interest in education to the teachers who inspired him as a student in segregated schools, and took a genuine interest in his future. While society argues about whether or not it is appropriate for schools to teach values, Plummer (Foster, 1997) says that “If teachers are just there for the dollar, then they are not going to bother. But if they are there as human beings and see the children as human beings, then teachers can’t avoid teaching values” (p. 102).

Plummer pursued an unconventional method of teacher certification and revealed that he found education courses to be useless. He thought classroom experience, knowledge of the students, and the ability to think on your feet were the most valuable resources to teaching. In an effort create more opportunities for young Black students, Plummer created his own scholarship program. He gathered the support of his Black colleagues and presented the idea to the White principal of his school. The principal immediately challenged him, saying that they did not have the money to invest into the testing required for the minority students to gain entrance into private prep schools. Plummer and the other Black teachers at school paid the expense out of their own pockets in a demonstration of what he called “Black Power” (Foster, 1997, p. 105). Sixteen out of the eighteen students they prepared for the examinations were accepted to prep school. “If you are a learned man you are a dangerous man, but if you are an ignorant man you are no threat at all. Not only will you be a slave to white people, but a slave to any type of vices that come along” (Foster, 1997, p. 104).

Foster (1997) introduces Leonard Collins as a “novice” educator who is 23 years old and a second-year teacher. He speaks about the importance of Black students learning from a Black

perspective. Collins describes himself as a reactionary teacher, fighting against the imposed curriculum with the mindset of encouraging his students to challenge set ideas.

Teachers have a tendency to promote patriotism. They glorify European contributions... Teachers don't denigrate the contributions of people, they just skip over them. They never address the perspectives of people of color. I put Africans within the context of everything that I teach. I do this with other cultures as well... By simply presenting the perspectives of people of color, I believe I am making a contribution (Foster, 1997, p. 178).

Collins self-identifies as a socialist, and integrates these ideas into his classroom learning. Without publicly recommending the political party, he suggests that his students examine the downside of capitalism, and question the cultural importance of money and individualism. He states that while American society has been desegregated, it was never properly integrated, as is evidenced by the lack of opportunity for Blacks in college admissions and the job market (Foster, 1997). "Black people don't go into teaching because they have had negative experiences in school... I don't live in this world to become rich, I want to live in this world to serve humanity" (Foster, 1997, p. 181).

This qualitative study analyzes the barriers that may prevent African American men from entering the teaching field, in rural impoverished areas. The three aforementioned participants from Foster's (1997) study experienced similar barriers. One of these obstacles was an ingrained sense of racism within the cultural and social communities at school. Lovelace identified the importance of self-motivation within the Black community to set and reach high goals, rather than rely on others for support. Plummer echoed the expressions of several participants within this study when he spoke of the value in personally investing in students to help them avoid the barriers he experienced. Critical race theory allowed a deeper look into the personal narratives of these African American teachers.

Scholars such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado and Mari Matsuda shaped critical race theory into a political movement with their claims that racism is ingrained in political, social and legal structures; the normative standard experiences of White European Americans should be challenged; and law is unable to create and maintain a racially equitable society (Lynn & Jennings, 2009, p. 180). Lynn & Jennings (2009) state that “The development of a critical race pedagogy is a way of addressing inequalities in classrooms as well as providing some information about the best way to move forward in order to transform our classrooms into places where minority students might thrive” (p. 181).

CRT asserts that schools serve as institutions whose primary function is to oppress its students to assure subservience to the dominant culture. Lynn & Jennings (2009) encourage educators and students to challenge the connections between power and knowledge, as well as agency and structure (p. 175). Four major themes align within critical pedagogues:

- (1) Power and knowledge should be questioned;
- (2) The dehumanization and oppression of students involves student participation;
- (3) Students can be empowered by reflection and dialogue; and
- (4) Students have the ability to use their knowledge to reconstruct oppressive social and cultural structures (Lynn & Jennings, 2009, p. 175).

These themes relate directly to African American male teachers, not only as a method of teaching students, but also as a doctrine for self-preservation within a career path dominated by White females. By encouraging students of all races to question authority and stand up for injustice within the school walls, they can become empowered to change racial stereotyping. African American male teachers can also apply these pedagogues to themselves, as a reminder to

use their skills and knowledge to question, reflect, and act in ways that deconstruct social oppression.

Lynn & Jennings (2009) executed a study within a South Central Los Angeles community of African Americans over the course of two years. The working-class participants were from a small Black community. Within the schools included in the study, over 75% of the students were African American, and more than 65% of the teachers were Black (Lynn & Jennings, 2009, p. 182). Teachers were selected based on interviews and classroom observation that indicated culturally relevant traits, rather than assimilationist attributes. Lynn & Jennings (2009) explain that “Culturally relevant teachers believe in African American students and have high expectations for them. Assimilationist teachers, on the other hand, promote deficit-based thinking about the ability of African American students to achieve” (p. 183). Interviews revealed that Black male teachers were not treated on par with their White colleagues. Often forced to share classrooms with other Black teachers, participants spoke of being instructed to teach subjects out of their area of expertise. They asserted that the administration checked up on them frequently and without prior warning.

For both students and educators, school curriculum and environment can advance the social, economic, political and cultural of Whites, while simultaneously casting a shadow of inferiority upon Black values and traditions (Lynn, 2006). Lynn (2006) asserts that the American government was founded on White supremacist principles that advocated ingrained racism. When Blacks began to gain freedom in the South during the Reconstruction period, their freedom came with the right to an education. However, instead of agreeing with the altruistic idea that schooling gave African American men a chance to learn and earn money, Lynn (2006)

argues that it was part of the acculturation process to strip Blacks of their own culture and history (p. 117-118).

When our most progressive African American leaders in the nation contend that African American children do not perform well in school because they are afraid of “acting white,” we know we have a problem that runs deeper than just lower test scores. We need to bring racism as an explanatory factor more overtly back into the discussion (Lynn, 2006, p. 119).

In order to transform education for African Americans, the ingrained nature of racism in America must be closely examined and discussed within the context of critical race theory.

As is evidenced in this study, many Black male teachers identify with the students they are educating because they have faced similar hardships and obstacles. Lynn (2001) expresses the hope that when these teachers set positive examples, “They [the students] come to understand that strength and courage are not defined by physical prowess or one’s ability to handle a weapon, but one’s ability to overcome obstacles” (p. 276). Statistically, African Americans are more likely to raise children in single parent families (Ruggles, 1994). Ruggles (1994) stated that “the black extended family has been a means of coping with both poverty and single parenthood” (p. 136). This has made the role of the African-American male teacher that much more significant in the lives of young Black students.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

African American men perpetuate the legacy of culturally responsive teaching by virtue of the diversity of their background. They are able to offer a higher level of personalization in their teaching that Black students do not normally experience on par with their White peers (Fenwick, 2001). American public schools are home to a growing population of ethnically and culturally diverse students, whereas the community of teachers remains predominantly European American. The United States Census Bureau (2012) reported that 50.4% of children younger

than 1 year of age in America are minorities (para. 1). Minority children are currently failing to thrive in school systems taught by predominantly White teachers who are more likely to be disconnected from their social and cultural communities. Therefore, the NEA (2012) considers the disparity between the percentage of minority students to minority teachers to be a “crisis” situation that will result in “a failure of all American students to learn the academic, personal, and social skills they need in the multicultural workplace of the future.” Culturally responsive teaching recognizes that children learn in a multitude of ways and benefit from different perspectives and approaches. African American male teachers possess varied cultural backgrounds that bring different perspective and knowledge into the classroom. This diversity promotes connection with students from similar environments and opens the pathway to culturally responsive teaching. Gunn (2010) wrote

The academic achievement gap continues to widen between culturally diverse students and their White peers. This disparity in achievement along demographic lines indicates a clear and present need to more fully prepare teachers on how to educate children of diverse backgrounds—a crucial component of developing a culturally responsive pedagogy. (p. vii)

Raising Expectations

Black male teachers can lead by example and set relatable expectations for minority students. Experiencing African American men in positions of academic authority may assist in changing the way children perceive racial roles in society. Ford, Harris, Tyson, and Trotman (2001) discussed

Too often, educators interpret differences as deficits, dysfunctions, and disadvantages; thus, many diverse students gain the ‘at risk’ label ... Changing our thinking about differences among children holds great promise for recruiting and retaining culturally diverse students in gifted education. (p. 52)

African American men radiate a powerful message of self-worth and accomplishment when they appear in the classroom in a position of authority. Black students are able to see a

tangible example of academic and professional success. Because African American men are statistically unlikely to graduate from high school and college, a Pygmalion Effect has been set into motion. The Pygmalion Effect is a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which low expectations lead to low achievement (Pygmalion effect, n.d.). The legacy of the Black educator is to create a new standard for minority students, which demands a high level of expectation culminating in achievement.

Summary

The United States has increasingly become a multicultural society. There are many minorities, and these minorities are also the face of America. Children need to be taught by teachers who look like them as well as teachers of all races (Johnson, 2008). Children also need to see male teachers in their schools. Many children today may lack a strong male figure in their lives, so it is even more important for these children to find a male role model at school.

Chapter 2 included research on the reasons minority men do not enter the teaching profession. Some men and minorities do not teach because of stereotypes and profiling they experience in the profession. Others do not teach because there is not enough money for them to support themselves. Others cannot afford the cost of a college degree: either the cost of education is too high, or they cannot find the time in their lives (Chmelynsky, 2005). Several programs have been implemented around the country to encourage more minority men to enter the teaching profession.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Research suggests minority male educators are underrepresented in the teaching field (Hutchings et al., 2008; Johnson, 2008; Jones, 2007; Lahelma, 2000; Mancus, 1992; Marsh et al., 2008; Martino, 2008; Matus, 2005; Milloy, 2003; Mills et al., 2004). To understand this phenomenon, researchers must explore why it is occurring. Because a goal of this study is to give African American male teachers a voice in explaining why they chose to become teachers in a rural impoverished school district environment, a qualitative method with a phenomenological design is the most appropriate choice for conducting the study. This chapter includes a description of the research design, sampling used, data-collection and -analysis procedures, validity, and limitations.

Research Design

Qualitative data is the most appropriate choice of methods when the researcher is interested in understanding the meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). According to Wertz (2005), the quality in the data sought under a phenomenological study is *concreteness*. That means the researcher needs to collect details of a person's lived experience rather than only their abstract views or interpretations of a situation. Thus, in a phenomenological study that uses interviews, the researcher asked questions that required participants to describe their experiences. An example of such questions is, "Can you describe your typical day?" Questions of this type helped the researcher ease the participant into the interview, helping the participant to be comfortable in talking about how he perceives his life as an African American teacher.

For this study, a qualitative method with a phenomenological design was used to elicit the lived experiences of African American male teachers. In gathering qualitative data,

interviews were conducted with six African American teachers who are employed in three impoverished school districts in a rural environment (see Appendix A for the complete list of interview questions). The interviews used semistructured questions such as the following:

1. What motivated you to become a teacher?
2. Did someone influence your choice to become a teacher?
3. Do you intend to remain in the teaching field or do you aspire to become an administrator at some level? Or do you want to change careers totally after a few years' teaching?
4. Did you follow a traditional route to teacher certification or did you have an alternative route?
5. What are the significant challenges you have faced since entering the teaching profession (i.e., low salary, no job security, too many discipline problems, etc.)?

Sampling Procedures

This study used purposive sampling to obtain participants for the research. Creswell (2009) noted that purposive sampling involves studying the entire population of a limited group (e.g., all African American teachers in three school districts in a rural environment). Purposive sampling does not produce a sample that is representative of a larger population, but when the researcher attempts to study a relatively limited group, it is exactly the correct sampling methodology to be used (Creswell, 2009; Spradley, 1979).

Selection of Subjects

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of African American male teachers who have chosen to teach in a rural, impoverished area. First, three school districts where there were African American male teachers were selected. All African American male

school teachers or administrators who were previously employed as teachers were invited to participate. There were 21 African American teachers or administrators employed in Grades K through 12 in the three school districts selected as sites for this study. A total of six teachers—educators in three districts—were sought for inclusion in this study; however, that number would have been revised if the number of African American male teachers who agree to participate in the study was not reached (see Table 1).

School Sites

Research was conducted in three school districts in rural Arkansas in the Delta. All three schools are within thirty miles of each other. School District 1 educates 951 students distributed throughout three schools (ESEA, 2012). The system contains: one elementary school, one middle school, one high school, and the alternative school is contracted out. The school system has been a low-performing district. During the 2011-2012 school year, none of the schools in this district met Arkansas standards and requirements qualifying them to earn AYP status. Each of these schools within the district were identified as Priority schools. The student population within these schools is predominately African American. This district has a total of 88 certified staff. Thirteen of these faculty members are African American males.

School District 2 educates 665 students, distributed throughout three schools (ESEA, 2012). The system contains: one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school. The school system has been a low-performing district. Last school year, only the elementary school met standards, while the middle and high schools were placed as Focus schools. This school student population is predominately European American. This district has a total of 37 certified staff. One of these staff members is an African American male.

School District 3 has 672 students who are distributed throughout two schools (ESEA, 2012). The system contains: one elementary school and one high school. It houses an alternative school within the two schools. The district has been low-performing and is currently in its second year ranked as a physically distressed school district. During the 2011-2012 school year, the elementary school met standards, while the high school was placed as a focus school. This school student population is predominately African American. This school has a total of 56 certified staff. Four staff members are African American males.

Table 1

Summary of School Characteristics Information

| | School District 1 | School District 2 | School District 3 |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| School | | | |
| Number | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Level | elementary, middle and high school | elementary, middle and high school | elementary and high school |
| Free/reduced price lunch | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Student Race | | | |
| African American | 795 (92%) | 145 (23%) | 336 (57%) |
| European American | 67 (8%) | 484 (74%) | 255 (43&) |
| Total | 862 | 629 | 591 |
| Educator's Gender | | | |
| African American | | | |
| Females | 46 (52.3%) | 5 (13.5%) | 11 (19.6%) |
| Males | 13 (14.8%) | 1 (2.7%) | 4 (7.1%) |
| European American | | | |
| Females | 19 (21.6%) | 26 (70.3%) | 31 (55.4%) |
| Males | 8 (9.1%) | 5 (13.5%) | 10 (17.9%) |
| Asian American | | | |
| Female | 1 (1.1%) | 0 (0 %) | 0 (0 %) |
| Male | 1 (1.1%) | 0 (0 %) | 0 (0 %) |
| Total | 88 | 37 | 56 |
| Participant | 4 | 1 | 1 |

Data-Collection Procedures

Permission was sought from the school districts selected for participation to conduct interviews with the African American male faculty or administrators who were former school teachers. Before the actual study was conducted, three volunteers to ensure the questions asked actually elicit the information sought in the study. After these trial interviews, the questions were revised.

All participants were asked the same interview questions in individual interviews. Interviews will be conducted in a place that is mutually acceptable to participant and researcher. African American male teachers were asked about why they chose teaching as a position, why they think the teaching profession has so few minority teachers, what do minority teachers offer to a school and its students, do they expect to stay in teaching, and other career-choice related questions. All interview questions were open-ended to allow participants the opportunity to respond as fully as possible to each question. All interviews were tape recorded for data-collection and -analysis purposes. Interview responses remained confidential, to prevent outside interference, participants were interviewed alone (Creswell, 2009).

The researcher contacted all participants by phone to arrange for an interview time and place. In most cases, the interviews were scheduled after-school hours at the participant's school. In two instances, the participants chose to come to the researcher's school for the interview. All interviews spanned in time from 45 minutes to an hour. Participants granted permission for their interviews to be audio-taped. After the evaluations were completed, they were transcribed by the researcher. Each participant received a copy of his transcript. The

teachers signed their transcripts to indicate accuracy, and then returned the document to the researcher.

The procedures for data collection occurred in the following order: (a) names of potential participants were obtained from the human-resources departments at each of the three school districts; (b) all African American male teachers in three rural school districts in a rural area received a letter of invitation to participate in this study; (c) the researcher did a follow-up personal phone call and ask teachers if they were participating and to answer any questions teachers may had about being in the study.

Participants were selected, and given a Letter of Consent that outlined the purpose of the study, what is expected of the participant, a promise that participants' identity will be protected, and that the participant has the right to withdraw from the study. Participants were asked for a convenient time and place for them to be interviewed (see Appendix B).

At the start of the interview, participants were asked to sign a consent form allowing for the interview to be tape recorded. Additionally, I asked each participant if he had any questions before the interview began. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes. After the interviews were over, the tape recordings were transcribed and analyzed.

Data saturation. Because there are many factors involved in determining sampling size in a qualitative study, most researchers avoid specifying an exact number. Instead, one concept that is used is data saturation, meaning a researcher has reached a sufficient number of participants that the data being reported is the same as has been reported in previous interviews. For a phenomenological study, Creswell (1998) suggested the number of participants needed to reach saturation is between five and 25; Morse (1995) said there should be at least six participants. The researcher hoped to get six African American teachers to participate in the

study. The three districts have a combined 21 teachers or former teachers who are now administrators, all of whom fit the study criteria of being an African American male employed as a teacher or previously as a teacher in one of the three chosen sites for this study.

Triangulation of the data. In addition to collecting data from qualitative interviews, I observed teacher's body language and facial expressions during the interviews and noted them with my personal thoughts and feelings about their experiences and recorded them in a journal throughout the data-collection process. In addition to journal entries, I reviewed archival data on participant's educational background. The data collected from the interviews, my observations, and documentation from the three school districts about the number of African American men who have been employed in the last 10 years will comprise the research.

Data Analysis for Interview

Once the interviews were conducted and transcribed, the data was analyzed. Analysis was completed by carefully reading all the transcripts twice. On the third reading, I began to mark and note common words and phrases used by each group of interviewees. The researcher transcribed the interviews and used open coding so the data can be sorted and grouped into common phrases and words. These common words and phrases were used to develop themes for reporting of the data. Additionally, my observations and data about the number of African American male teachers were incorporated into the data analysis.

The Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design, the researcher can be considered part of the research, especially if the researcher shares traits in common with the participants. I am an African American man who made the decision to become a teacher. I decided to teach in a rural district in a rural environment because it was the place where I thought

I could make the biggest difference in the lives of the children in my home state of Arkansas. I am now an administrator in a rural school district where I can mentor other African American male teachers. I believe it is my social obligation to encourage more African American men to enter the teaching profession.

I chose to be an educator to make a positive impact on the lives of students to make a difference. In my 10 years in education, I have been heartbroken to see students as young as 5 who already thought they were worthless and incapable; but I have seen them shed those beliefs in favor of more positive ones. I have had students come to me, labeled by previous educators as “low-functioning,” only to have them speed past their classmates in what were considered their weakest areas. I believe educators must work with these children, and let them know I believe in them.

My students’ growth is my reward. I believe I am a role model for their futures, and I have made a difference in their lives. That is why, no matter what goes on around me, I am strengthened by recalling that my reward is being there for my students. I firmly believe this, and it motivates me to inspire my students to be whatever they choose to be.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the intersection of researcher, participants, and the interpretation of the data collected. Because I am African American and was a teacher before becoming an administrator, it was important that I not let my own experiences as an African American male teacher overshadow the lived experiences of the participants in the study. It was important that I not indicate agreement or disagreement with participants as they respond to the research questions. In that way, I prevented bias from entering into the study.

Study Validity

Validity in a qualitative study is not the same as it is in a quantitative study. In quantitative studies, internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity are expected to be shown through the numerical data collected. In qualitative studies, however, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are required of the nonnumerical data collected.

The research establishes *credibility* when the participants view the data as believable from their perspectives (Creswell, 2009). In this study, credibility will be accomplished through member checking, meaning each participant received a transcribed copy of his interviews and signed the transcript if he believed the document accurately reflects what he said in the interview.

Transferability indicates how easily qualitative data can be used in examining different scenarios or environments (Qualitative validity, p. 1). According to Trochim (2006), when the researcher describes the context of the study and the assumptions made within the research, transferability can be improved (para. 10).

Dependability refers to the ability to replicate the findings in a study, meaning that the same results could be found if the study was replicated. To ensure dependability in the study, another graduate student conducted an audit trail on the data collection, procedures, and data analysis in the study to see if the study could be replicated by another researcher. Trochim (2006) discusses the importance of enhancing dependability by means of the researcher keeping track of changes within the research setting (para. 11). In this study, I report how these changes affected the way I approached the study.

When results can be confirmed by others, a level of *confirmability* is established (Qualitative validity, para. 7). To achieve confirmability, another graduate student conducted a

data audit in which the data-collection and -analysis procedures are examined to make a judgment about whether the study has potential for bias or distortion (Trochim, 2006).

Content Validity

Content validity was established of the interview questions, with a discussion conducted at a rural Arkansas Public School in May, 2012. One assistant superintendent of secondary schools, one elementary building principal, two male secondary educators, and one elementary male educator were selected as a sample of convenience to participate in the discussion. I discussed the interview questions and attained feedback from the participants and noted them, and the interview questions were changed and revised. The purpose of the discussion was to test the face and content validity of the survey instrument.

Limitations of the Study

There are limits to collecting data this way. The biggest challenge is interpreting the various data in a nonbiased way. There is no set standard for analyzing qualitative data. Second, participants may not truthfully respond to the interview questions or may answer the way they think the researcher wants them to answer.

Description of Participants

The participants selected for this qualitative study were African American male teachers from rural environments. Their barriers and lived experiences were analyzed in relation to the underrepresentation of African American men in the teaching field. All participants were certified teachers with a valid teaching certificate.

A total of 22 participant consent forms were sent to the African American male teachers in rural environments. Seventeen consent forms were returned and indicated a willingness to join the study. Out of the 17 potential participants, five were eliminated from the opportunity to

be included in the project because they were retired from the profession and did not hold a valid teaching certificate.

A total of 12 African American male teachers in the rural environments were eligible to be included in the research. Creswell (1998) suggested that a phenomenological study should include between five and 25 participants to reach saturation; Morse (1995) said there should be at least six participants. Patton (1990) explained that a purposeful random sample is not a representative random sample and suggested that researchers select a number of participants that they can handle to complete a study. Having a purposeful random sample increases the credibility of the study, whereas having a purposeful random sample reduces suspicions about why others were not chosen for the study. However, these strategies do not make the data more generalizable. The limit for the study was set at six participants and number that the researcher could handle. Educators from all levels were considered appropriate candidates for the experiment, including teachers, counselors, and administrators. The participants in the study consisted of one high school principal, one middle school counselor, one central-office administrator of a gifted and talented program, and three teachers from elementary, middle, and secondary areas. To accommodate the necessary participant rubric, they were separated by grade level taught and position. This method is known as stratified sampling. In stratified sampling, the entire population is separated into different subgroups before the participants are selected.

Participant 1 is a traditional veteran educator who has taught in several states and has now returned to his hometown after retiring from the Louisiana public school system. Participant 1 is married and now serves as the district's Gifted and Talented systems administrator. Earlier in his career, he served as an elementary school principal. Participant 1 has a master's and a specialist degree and is currently in the process of starting his own business

in the local community. Prior to returning to his hometown, Participant 1 was a GT teacher and a band director in New Orleans. His first degree was earned from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff in instrumental music with a minor in psychology in 1974. In 1976 he began graduate work on a master of arts degree from Governors State University in University Park, Illinois, with a major in music and a minor in invention and creativity. This degree was not completed until 1987. Participant 1 served in the U.S. Navy Band in New Orleans (1978–1982), and earned a master of arts degree in education administration and supervision from Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Participant 2 is a traditional veteran educator with 36 years of experience. He grew up in a rural area with parents who were school administrators. His wife and daughter are also educators in the state. Participant 2 holds a master's degree in educational leadership from Arkansas State University and has no desire to be an administrator. Participant 2 has been a civics teacher and is currently working as a school counselor, half time at the elementary and half time at the junior high level. All his teaching experiences have been in Arkansas' Delta region.

Participant 3 is a nontraditional educator who has served in the armed forces, been a police officer, and served as police chief. Participant 3 is a native of Kansas and moved to Arkansas more than 20 years ago. Participant 3 starting his teaching career as an alternative school teacher and director in a Delta school. Participant 3 is currently a high school principal in a Delta school with a 7–12 configuration where African American students are the majority. Participant 3 holds a master's degree in administration and counseling from Harding University. Participant 3 is divorced and serves as a pastor of a church in a local community.

Participant 4 is a nontraditional teacher teaching agriculture in a majority-White school. Participant 4 is married and has three children who attend school in the district where he teaches. Participant 4 has a bachelor's degree, but has completed several hours toward a master's degree. Participant 4 has 13 years' teaching experience and sponsors a school organization in his teaching area: Future Farmers of America.

Participant 5 is a new traditional educator to the field of teaching with only 3 years' experience. He is married and has school-age and college-age children. His wife is an administrator and their children attend school where he teaches. Participant 5 has a Master of Arts degree in teaching and is currently working on a second master's degree in administration with a desire to obtain a PhD at some point. Participant 5 also serves as a pastor in another community outside of his teaching community. Participant 5 teaches elementary mathematics and was certified through the traditional route at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

Participant 6 is a traditional veteran teacher with 33 years of experience, all in the school district he attended. Participant 6 is single with no children and is currently teaching music at the elementary level. Participant 6 has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and lives in the community in which he teaches (see Table 2 for information on all six participants).

Table 2

Summary of Demographic Characteristics of Participants

| Participant | School district | Current position | Education | Certification/ licensure | Subjects taught/grades | Years of experience |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--|--|---------------------|
| 1 | 1 | Gifted and Talented Administrator | Master Specialist | Building Admin.K-12 Instrumental Music K-12 Gifted & Talented K-12 | Elementary Principal 2-6 Band 9-12 Music K-12 | 38 |
| 2 | 1 | Counselor | Master | Secondary Principal 5-12 Social Studies 7-12 Secondary Guidance 5-12 | Civics 9 History 3-8 | 36 |
| 3 | 3 | High School Principal | Master | Business Ed/Voc Endors. Business Tech Building Admin.K-12 | Business 7-12 Alternative School Director K-12 Assistant Principal K-6 8-12 | 15 |
| 4 | 2 | Vocational Agriculture Teacher | Bachelor | Agri Sci & Tech 7-12 | County extension Service | 23 |
| 5 | 1 | Elementary Math teacher | Master | Scie/Math 4-8 | Geometry, algebra 9-12 | 3 |
| 6 | 1 | Elementary Music Teacher | Bachelor | Vocal music K-12 | Choir 9-12 | 35 |

Four subgroups of participants were established: elementary teachers, middle school teachers, high schoolteachers and administrators. These groups consisted of one elementary teacher, four middle school teachers, eight high school teachers, three administrators, and one counselor. The final participants were comprised of one elementary teacher, one middle school teacher, one high school teacher, two administrators, and one counselor (see Table 3, p. 55).

Summary

This qualitative research study was accomplished in a professional approach to offer an extensive and comprehensive technique of data collection and analysis. The triangulation and coding techniques used to categorize major themes and features are a significant step in the overall analysis and understanding of the collected data. Interviews were tape-recorded. In case the interview transcripts are damaged, electronic copies were stored with a backup. The interviews explored the barriers that prevent African American men from entering the teaching field. The interview data will be analyzed for thematic content and reported in Chapter 4 by those themes. Chapter 4 provides a detailed explanation of the results of this study, and Chapter 5 will discuss the vital conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 includes the results of interviews conducted with six teachers from three districts in rural impoverished areas in the United States. African American teachers and administrators who started out as teachers in these three districts were invited to participate in the study. Permission was received from the individual district and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of Arkansas. Chapter 4 is divided into three sections. Part 1 is a review of how the study was conducted, including the number of subjects invited to participate. Part 2 contains a discussion of how the data was sorted and coded. Each participant was given a number, starting with P1 through P6 in order to protect their identity. Part 3 includes the themes that were developed from the analysis.

Demographic Data

In the interview process, I found five areas of demographic information; profession/grade level, educational level, years in education, subject area, and age. The demographic data collected in this study are presented in the following tables. Table 3 contains the educational levels of the selected participants.

Half of the participants in the study had over 20 years' teaching experience, whereas the other half had 15 years or less. Both traditional and alternative certification routes were utilized. A traditional teaching certification refers to the completion of a bachelor's or master's degree in education, passing standardized tests, and fulfilling other state requirements (Bowe, 2011). Alternative teaching certification usually requires a bachelor's degree from an accredited university, and modified state requirements (Bowe, 2011). Two people in the study were certified through alternative means, whereas all the other participants received traditional

certification. One of the teachers who initially completed alternative certification went through a traditional certification upon completing his master's degree. Of the 6 participants, five worked as teachers before earning their master's degree in administration. The next chapter will discuss the importance of the demographics in this study, and how the economic climate impacted young African American men who sought to become educators (see Table 3).

Table 3

Demographic Information (N = 6)

| Demographic information | Number of participants |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Profession/Grade Level | |
| Elementary School | 1 |
| Middle School | 1 |
| High School | 1 |
| Administration | 2 |
| Counselor | 1 |
| Educational Level | |
| Bachelor's Degree | 2 |
| Master's Degree | 3 |
| Specialist Degree | 1 |
| Years in Education | |
| 1–5 years | 1 |
| 5–10 years | 0 |
| 10–15 years | 2 |
| 15–20 years | 0 |
| 20–25 years | 3 |
| Subject Area | |
| Math | 1 |
| Connections/Exploratory/Electives | 2 |
| Age | |
| 41 years–50 years old | 2 |
| 51 years–60 years old | 3 |
| 61 years–70 years old | 1 |

Research Question

This study aims to reveal an understanding of barriers that may prevent African American men from entering the teaching field, particularly in rural impoverished areas. Invitations were sent out to all African American male teachers in three school districts in

Arkansas after receiving permission from the leadership at those districts. The invitations were distributed to the school principals who gave them to male African American teachers or administrators who were formerly employed at their school. A contact number and e-mail address for the researcher was listed on the invitation so that participants could state their interest in taking part in the study. After six participants gathered, the researcher closed the study. The names of the other volunteers were kept in case someone withdrew from the study or data saturation had not been reached after the sixth interview.

Data Analysis

The six interviews utilized standardized and clarifying questions. The participant was asked to express closing remarks, additional comments, or any statements pertinent to the study. The statements were not required to be addressed toward a specific question.

According to Merriman (2009), triangulation involves the use of multiple sources of data. It includes cross-checking data collected through observations at different times and places and interview data collected from different people with various perspectives or from follow-up interviews. In this study, triangulation was attained through an examination of one school site. Additionally, data collected through various sources including school data (teacher contracts, highly qualified staff report), interviews, and observations of body language and facial appearances contributed to triangulation. Comparison and review of interview transcriptions, observations, school files, and the literature contributed to the triangulation of the data.

After receiving the verified transcripts back from the participants, they were read by the researcher several times. The next step involved entering data from the interviews, observations, and researcher's notes by hand. The data were organized and sorted into themes by the researcher from statements and ideas voiced by the participants. The themes came from words

and ideas mentioned frequently by participants. Within the transcripts, the most commonly used words and phrases were: *opportunity, not manly, technology, salaries, respect, achievement gap, protector, role model, behavior problems, race and resources*. Those terms were used to develop five themes from the findings: stereotypes of African American male, motivations to teach, barriers faced by African American men in becoming teachers, specific problems encountered in classroom, and encouraging other African American men to teach.

Interviews and other qualitative data were shared confidentially with key participants for their responses to the interview. Participants were invited to review, clarify or correct responses to interview questions. To protect the anonymity of participants, parenthesis—()—were used by the researcher.

Observations

At the beginning of each interview, I allowed time to discuss my career and background to build up a level of comfort with each participant by getting to know their career story. During the interviews, observations were noted on participants' body language and facial expressions as they answered the interview questions. During the interviews, all participants' body language showed that they were willing and comfortable discussing the topic of interest. During the interviews, participants were relaxed, ready to share, and voiced their insights on the topic of the study. Participants' facial expressions were inviting and they smiled as they discussed the questions. During the interviews, participants wished the researcher well and welcomed follow-up questions.

Document Review

I collected and reviewed the teacher contract data and school's report of highly qualified staff. The school documents were examined and triangulated with interview and observation data.

Critical Race Theory

This study employs the use of Critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework for examining the educational barriers and experiences of African American male teachers. Researchers have overlooked how race affects the quest of equitable higher education (Howard, 2008). CRT provides a framework to identify and implement protective and nurturing strategies to enable African American youth to experience school and society in a manner similar to that of their non-Black peers.

Counter-storytelling was used to provide additional accounts of the barriers that keep African American men from entering the teaching profession. "Counterstories are both a method to tell stories of often-untold experiences and also a tool for analyzing and challenging the dominant discourse and the stories of those in power" (Smith, Altbach, & Lomotey, 2002). In order to establish participant counterstorytelling within this study, 6 African American male educators were surveyed about the perceived impact that race has played in their teaching experiences. By engaging in counterstorytelling, I analyzed African American male teachers' lived experiences as teachers in the field. Specifically, their counternarratives gave them the opportunity to voice and reflect on their experiences. Furthermore, by telling their stories in their own words, their counternarratives allow them to contradict the perceptions and stereotypes of African American male teachers and the stories explaining their low numbers. Through participants' counterstorytelling, I depicted how the participants felt.

Teacher Recruitment

There is a meager pool of African American male candidates for teaching positions in the United States. This stems from a larger educational problem. According to a study conducted by the Schott Foundation for Public Education, only 47% of Black men graduated from college (Harper & Porter, 2012, p. 2). The United States Department of Education reported that approximately 4.3%–4.5% of these high school graduates enrolled in a school of higher learning during the 30-year period between the years 1976 and 2006 (Harper & Porter, 2012, p. 2).

In the interviews conducted in rural environments, it is evident that the surveyed schools displayed an active effort to recruit African American male candidates. One of the superintendents detailed his visits to career fairs and surrounding colleges in Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee. However, despite an expressed commitment to increase African American men in his school, he stated his discouragement with the process. In the last several years, he has only hired one African American teacher in his district. Potential recruits revealed to him that they could not meet the admission exam requirements to gain access to the professional teaching programs.

Themes

Theme 1: Stereotypes of African American Male. Interviews revealed an awareness of unfavorable racial stereotypes regarding African American males. The majority of teachers in this study linked their interest in becoming educators with the goal of creating positive associations with young Black men. They recounted their efforts to avoid perpetuating widely held beliefs and stereotypes about African American men. Participants in the study spoke of family members and friends who had failed to graduate school or made choices that ended in

incarceration. Participant 5 made this commentary about why stereotypes about African American males are perpetuated:

I believe that at the state that we are in now as an African American people, is that we need more positive role models so that they can teach us how to go and which way to go. A lot of times we lose that aspect of where we come from and because we are not bringing it into the classroom or bringing into what we are, I guess, trying to accomplish we lose a gap there. Our young people now don't know about Martin Luther King, they don't know about Malcolm X, Thurgood Marshall; they don't know about these different people that fought to get us to where we are right now. And because they don't know that they have no way of going forward.

Some of the teachers in the study spoke about negative stereotypes they encountered. Participant 1 offered his thoughts:

That goes right back to the point to where it's the mindset. You know, if they do enter into the education field, like I said, it may be vo-tech or physical education but far as this, actually in the classroom, teaching a core subject or something like that we don't do that as African American males.

The interviews provide an account of young Black men that is rarely shared in educational discussions. DeCuir and Dixson (2003) asserted that "The use of counterstories allows for the challenging of privileged discourses ... serving as a means for giving voices to marginalized groups" (p. 27). Several of the respondents at the predominately African American schools also discussed the importance of shattering stereotypes. As Participant 3 stated:

I try to teach them that learning is fun, but the consequences of your actions will determine which direction or which course you will do. For me when I walk into a classroom, students say "[Hey Mr. Administrator]." I want to teach them that respect goes not just to me but also to the classroom teacher. So when I walk into a classroom I always recognize the teacher first, I always use sir and yes sir, ma'am and no ma'am. When the administrator demonstrates respect to his teachers or his other staff members then the students know that that's what the administrator expects, especially African American men.

Several educators stated their belief that race was frequently a factor in how they were treated and perceived by their coworkers and administrative staff. Participant 2 said:

Well, you are going to have to learn how to be patient. You are going to have to learn how to be flexible. You are going to have to go into the community, know your

community, know your parents, know your students, know your colleagues. If you know all of those things then the problems you have from white administration won't be as bad because your parents will come to bat for you.

A similar statement was provided by Participant 6:

Well, it can sometimes become draining and get a bit depressive to see the state that each year progresses how African Americans, male and female, are kinda straying away from cultural traditions where, you know, traditional music that used to be basically, exclusively African American is almost now being taken over by other cultures and having them to embrace their culture and be proud of where they come from.

Critical to the influence of counterstorytelling are the accounts of discrimination and racism.

Many of the participants in this study have experienced such occurrences at their schools with regularity. Participant 4 discussed one such example:

As a teacher who has White and Hispanic kids who talk in class and challenge stuff in class discussions ... some might say they are just being critical thinkers and teacher evaluators may praise them for that. But each time I ... disagree or don't like something we've discussed or read, I always think about the current topic so that my supervisor doesn't obtain information that I'm being disrespectful towards my students.

The participants were given a framework to structure their personal interpretation of barriers and experiences to becoming educators. There was no solicitation to provide "safe" or politically correct responses. When CRT is used to collect personal observations and insights from African American male teachers, it can be a valuable methodological tool. Dixson and Rousseau (2006) discussed how "Counterstories offered by students of color can be used as a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (p. 35).

During the interviews, several teachers challenged the fairness of the teacher assessments, indicating that they were racially biased and thus may play a factor in the process of recruiting teachers. Participant 3 stated:

One of the biggest challenges is actually being hired. It's amazing how the "good ole boy" system still rules in the administration process. I went to several interviews where I knew I was the best qualified candidate but individuals were chosen because of not of what they knew but who they knew.

Participant 2 was more explicit about the racial disadvantages stated:

[Our] students are the students of parents who had problems in our school district and most of our teachers are still in the system. So they don't care very much about the system. They tell their students not to care about the system and it is reflected in the behavior of the students in our school district. Therefore, it is a hard thing to motivate them until they leave and come back and see how we are trained together....

Counterstories can be a useful tool in discovering varied and personalized experiences that may present barriers within the education field. Noguera (2003) indicates that African American men had very different experiences teaching in schools than Caucasian educators. While both valued education, Black males were less likely to feel encouraged by their own teachers.

The lack of educational research and relative silence from the academic community at large has become a disturbing reality surrounding the dilemma of African American male teachers (Smith et al., 2002). The researcher hopes to encourage continued study of the barriers that discourage African American men from entering the teaching profession, as well as examine the cultural contributions to their underrepresentation within the profession.

Theme 2: Motivations to teach. African American male teachers stated a wide variety of motivators to teach. Four participants reported that they had family members who were teachers. This motivated them to carry on with what they saw as “public service” to their community. Other participants cited reason such as “I enjoy teaching youth and helping them to become successful in life,” (Participant 1) or “As a police officer, I became tired of putting African American men in jails so I decided to work to keep them out of jail by educating them” (Participant 3). In this study, the greatest motivation to teach was a desire to make a difference.

Participant 6 reported that he had been motivated by his own high school teacher to become an educator. Participant 4 said that his experience being taught by an African American male teacher inspired him to consider more career opportunities. Having originally planned to

work as a car mechanic after graduating high school, this teacher encouraged him to reevaluate his choices. Seeing an African American male who had achieved his dream made it seem possible for him to reach a higher potential. Participant 4 recounted spending many hours talking to this teacher, who encouraged him to attend college and realize his dream of becoming an educator.

Another participant reported that he was motivated by the desire to create a life that was not dictated by his family's past. He did not want his future to be limited to what his own father had done, which was working in the cotton fields all his life. Participant 2 had bigger dreams, which included being a teacher. He decided to follow his dream and is very satisfied with his choice.

Participant 5, a teacher of 3 years, focused on the importance of being a role model for children. He thought that children seeing an African American man in a role of authority would help dispel the myth that there is a racial achievement gap. His wife and family supported his dream to become an educator. He hopes to motivate more African American men to join him in the profession.

The majority of participants decided to become educators with the goal of making a difference in the lives of children, particularly African American male students. They spoke of a need to lift these young men out of a cycle of self-imposed belief in their own inability to achieve. Participant 5 emphasized the importance of African American men acting as positive educational role models for the younger generation, to show that skin color should in no way limit their academic dreams. Participant 5 stated that his motivation came from his family. The eldest of 14 siblings, he was raised by a single mother. He reported spending a lot of his time helping his brothers and sisters do their homework. The active decision to become a role model

for his siblings led him to enroll in college while working part time. When asked of his experiences, Participant 5 said, “It just takes effort and we can lift others up and change our whole society.”

Theme 3: Barriers faced by African American men in becoming teachers. The most significant obstacle voiced by the participants was a lack of positive African American male role models when they were young. Half of the participants in this study had at least 20 years’ teaching experience. They entered the profession in a time when few men taught at the elementary level, let alone African American men. Participant 6 mentioned the small but noticeable improvement in the number of African American male teachers and professors that exist today, who are able to serve as positive examples for the younger generation.

American society perpetuates the belief that teaching is a woman’s job, particularly in the lower elementary grades. “In 1980, 75 percent of primary school teachers ... were women. Today women make up 80 and 81 percent of those fields” (Coontz, 2012). Several participants noted that this living stereotype impacted their consideration to join the teaching profession. As Participant 4 stated, “African America men have spent centuries in this country being de-masculinized [sic]. So to opt to enter a profession that was most occupied by women was a bit difficult, because your male ego is on the line.” Participant 5 talked about the importance of broadening society’s view of the teaching profession:

We are living at a time when it is very important to think outside the box, and erase preconceptions of what a person ought to be or not be. One of those ways is for men of all colors to get involved in teaching. A lot of our children have no male role model at home today. We men need to step up and care for the children of the future. Children should see people of all colors and genders in the classroom; that is the way we will change society. Children will see that success is only about being motivated. It is not about the color of their skin. That is the way we can change things in society.

Salary presents another barrier to African American men who are considering entering the teaching profession (Hanushek, 2011). The complaint of inadequate compensation spans

educators of all genders and races. “Studies show that as occupations gain a higher percentage of female workers, the pay for those jobs goes down relative to wages in similarly skilled jobs that remain bastions of male employment” (Coontz, 2012). Some of the participants in this study said the salary was adequate when they were single but it was a bit harder when there were children to support at home. Participant 1 said, “It would be easier if we were given extra money for school supplies or for classroom materials. Currently I use my own money for that.”

Nationwide, reforms that would reward teachers for exemplary education in the classroom are slowly emerging. Green (2010) detailed the federal Teacher Incentive Fund, which has risen from \$97 million to \$400 million in teacher payouts. However, such financial reward is heavily based on standardized testing rather than incremental classroom successes.

Three participants stressed the importance of offering an incentive to bring African American male teachers into the classroom. Participant 5 stated,

Today an African American male college graduate has many more opportunities than I had. So it comes down to the economics as well. We aren't going to be attracting the best candidates unless we can at least give them a stronger offer for salary. There has to be a way to help impoverished school districts like mine to get some government support, or incentives, so that we can offer a more realistic salary for these new graduates.

Low salaries and the effeminate stereotype of teaching were concerning factors for the participants. However, the overriding barrier for these male African Americans breaking into the education profession was a lack of money to attend college. Most of the participants thought it was important to increase scholarship funds for African American men to attend college. Some suggested the idea of pledging 5 years' teaching in return for academic scholarships. They believed this would serve not only the teachers, but also the recipient children from minority backgrounds. This concept is similar to the Teach For America (TFA) program.

TFA was founded in 1989 to address the educational inequities facing children in low-income communities across the United States by expanding the pool of teacher candidates available to the schools those children attend. TFA recruits ... people who are

willing to commit to teach for a minimum of two years in low-income schools. (Decker, Mayer, & Glazerman, 2004, p. xi)

Participants voiced a desire for the creation of comparable programs that would target African American men in their endeavor to earn education degrees.

Theme 4: Specific Problems Encountered in the Classroom. All participants identified student discipline as a significant obstacle to teaching. Cultural barriers play a role in this problem. Research by Monroe (2005) supported the theory that “Cross-cultural comparisons moored in examinations of race, ethnicity and SES are important, as behavioral norms in middle-class and communities often differ significantly from standards found among low-income and African American populations” (p. 320). However, having an African American male teacher in the classroom does not provide an immediate solution. Participant 3 spoke of the importance of firm classroom rules and objectives, whereas Participant 2 emphasized the need for clear and immediate consequences to disruptive student behavior.

The interviews revealed frustration with school disciplinary systems. Participants mentioned the existence of underlying social and cultural issues that prevented their students from engaging in positive behavior in the classroom. Participant 5 said,

It’s hard for a hungry child to behave his or her best when all they can think about is getting some food ... I have at least six students who told me that the only food they get is what is given out at school, because the Food Stamps they are given don’t last for a month, so their parents depend on them to eat as much as they can at school.

Hildenbrandt (2010) explained that children who suffer from consistent hunger are at risk for increased school absences, tardiness and poor health. In turn, this can lead to poor levels of concentration, lower standardized test scores and difficulty with problem-solving.

Participants mentioned that many children go home to an empty house after school. These students have no encouragement or assistance to complete homework. Participant 4 suggested that it might be helpful to create an after-school homework club staffed by teacher

volunteers. Such programs have been found to have a notable impact on the educational and disciplinary success of African American children. Prager (2011) explored the

Brotherhood Sister Sol (BHSS), an out-of-school and summer program in the Bronx. BHSS is an 'evidence-based' model ... with emphasis on morality and ethics. Eighty-five percent of their students graduate from high school, as opposed to 24 percent in similarly troubled neighborhoods. (p. 6)

Participants also expressed frustration with the amount of paper work associated with their jobs. They agreed that their students would be better served if they had more time to engage in student-oriented activities. Participant 1 stated that "We need less paper work so we can spend more time on planning and executing lesson plans that can help children achieve."

Theme 5. Encouraging other African American men to teach. During the interview, participants were asked how they would reply to another African American male asking why he should become a teacher. This query elicited the most responses out of all the questions in the study. Every respondent made a case for why it was important for African American men to become teachers. Three participants said they would tell African American men that although teaching is a good profession for anyone, it can be very challenging. Four participants reported that they would warn prospective teachers of the low salary. Participant 3 was hopeful as he stated, "Don't give up; better salaries are coming."

Most of the participants called it a duty for African American men to teach. Participant 5 stated that "as role models, we can show our African American children that there is really no achievement gap. The gap is in the motivation to learn, to understand what education can mean." Participant 5, who had taught for the fewest number of years, commented:

Because of the structure of society, only a male can rebuild the broken system. Women are for nurturing and men for protection. At this point in time, our children need protection for the rebuilding process to begin.

The participants who had taught for longer periods, saw teaching as method of giving back to their community. Their interviews revealed a belief that teaching served a higher social purpose for their communities. Participant 6 said, “In the community where I work, there is a need for male role models.” Participant 2 commented:

There are many rewards [in teaching], other than monetary. Knowing that you have made a difference in a young person’s life has a spiritual feeling of satisfaction. The many “thanks” that you receive from former students outweigh the bad days by far.

In Theme 4, participants noted that although there were daily challenges associated with being public school teachers in impoverished rural areas, they were still grateful that they had chosen teaching as a profession. The participants thought that it would be an asset to have larger numbers of African American men teaching, especially in rural areas where there are fewer role models for African American children. They were able to overcome the barriers of gender stereotyping and low salary to achieve this larger goal.

Summary

This study aims to reveal an understanding of barriers that may prevent African American men from entering the teaching field, particularly in rural impoverished areas. Six African American male educators with current teaching accreditation took part in an interview process. Critical Race Theory was used as a guiding framework to interpret the subject interviews. Counterstorytelling provided additional information. Five themes were examined: stereotypes of African American male, motivation to teach, barriers faced by African American men in becoming teachers, specific problems encountered in the classroom, and encouraging other African American men to teach. In chapter 5, the results of the study are discussed. Recommendations for practice are made, and conclusions are drawn.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

Decrease in African American male teachers in public schools nationwide is a present trend. This study focused primarily on African American male teachers and sought to understand why a limited number of them are entering the teaching profession. Several indicators that contribute to the lack of African American men' interest were revealed in interviews and observations of six African American male educators in rural environments. This study found several factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of African American men in the teaching field.

Summary

This study addresses the rapid decline of African American male teachers in the United States. Between 1981 and 2006, the percentage of male elementary school teachers in the United States dropped in half from 18% to 9% (Johnson, 2008). African American male teachers comprise only 1% of the total public school teacher population, despite the fact that African American students comprise 20% of the public school student population (Lewis, 2006). Research has consistently shown that the shortage of African American male teachers is caused by economic, educational, social, and cultural factors (Brown & Butty, 1999; Cooper, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Gursky et al., 2004; Jackson, 2003; Moore, 2001; NCES, 2003). This chapter will address the findings and recommendations based on this study.

Research Question

The following research question guided this qualitative study: What barriers may prevent African American men from entering the teaching field, in rural impoverished areas? The theoretical framework for this research was developed based on CRT. This study focuses on

identifying barriers to African American men entering the teaching profession. Six African American male educators from rural school districts in Arkansas were interviewed. Findings show that deterrents included finances, cultural commitment, poverty, lack of mentorship, and recruitment concerns.

Interpretation of Data

Finances are one of the primary indicators impeding African American men from entering the teaching profession. Many participants in the study were frustrated that the cost of attending college and graduate school to earn a teaching degree was not commensurate with a teacher's estimated earnings. An interview with a rural school superintendent revealed the inability to recruit African American men into the teaching profession because of the low salary. To create a larger pool of qualified teacher candidates, financial scholarship is imperative. In 2000, the Walton Delta Teachers scholars program was initiated to offer scholarship opportunities for minorities planning to enter the teaching profession. The scholarship awards students a substantial amount of money to help with tuition, books, and other fees. Recipients of the scholarship agree to teach in rural Arkansas for a predetermined amount of time. To attract more African American men into the teaching profession, it would be beneficial for state legislatures to increase funding in support of public education and increase teacher salaries.

The African American culture places importance on the role of extended family. As a result, the closeness of the family often impacts personal and professional goals. In many households, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins serve in parental roles to other family members. Thus, a sense of familial commitment may be placed on an individual to financially and emotionally provide for their relatives. This can manifest in pressure to get a lower level job that pays immediately and does not require schooling.

This study revealed a conflict felt by many African American men, who feel forced to choose between their commitments and responsibilities to their extended families, and their personal and professional aspirations. Participants mentioned that obtaining a higher education degree sometimes caused alienation from their families. Going to college was often equated to being conceited and elitist. It would be valuable to develop a taskforce to offer support to African American men who are considering the teaching profession. This could be used as a tool to assist prospective educators to achieve a balance between culture and career.

Poverty is prevalent in African American communities in the United States. According to data from the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine (2009), 90% of African American Children will enroll in Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) before they are 20 years old. Poor nutrition is associated with poverty. When students do not receive adequate nutrition, their cognitive development does not reach full potential (Hildenbrandt, 2010). Thus, it can be determined that from a young age, African American children face significant academic disadvantages due to an increased likelihood of experiencing poverty and hunger. These obstacles must be tempered or removed with effective social and community programs to create an atmosphere that stimulates academic achievement and inspires African American men to return benefit to the community through education.

The findings of the research discovered the absence of a recruiting platform specifically targeting African American men to enter the teaching profession. One school cited a lack of financial resources to develop and maintain such a program. To create a larger pool of qualified African American male teaching candidates, supportive measures should be put in place during formative schooling years. It would be advantageous for local colleges to develop partnerships with secondary schools and establish mentoring programs geared toward encouraging African

American enrollment. The review of literature did not identify a successful model or process for recruiting and retaining African American men into the teaching field. The majority of recruitment programs discussed in the review of literature presented some ways of using successful recruitment strategies and addressed the goal of recruiting minorities into the education field.

Critical Race Theory and Themes

In order to fully grasp the impact of CRT findings, race, wealth, gender and sexuality must be considered as parts of a whole, rather than independent factors that have no bearing on each other (Hiraldo, 2010). Many African American men experience frustration, fear and anger when told by society that race does not matter. Their life experiences with social and academic barriers tell a different story. The societal promotion of a yet unrealized equal society has created a hypocritical environment that is dismissive of racial hardship (Howard, 2008). Counter-storytelling gives African American men a voice that tells truths otherwise overlooked by the predominantly White academics and politicians. “A theoretical framework centered squarely on the salience of race, racism, power, and the education of racially diverse students in this country would allow us to have a conversation that is desperately needed, most certain to be uncomfortable, and long overdue” (Howard, 2008, p. 962).

The stereotyping of African American males become unraveled as the systemic barriers to education and prosperity are exposed through counter-storytelling. CRT uses counter-stories to look deeper into the social conditions at colleges and universities, and to determine racial diversity and inclusivity (Hiraldo, 2010). “In many cases, counter-stories support the permanence of racism” (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 54).

Participants within this study voiced their experiences with racism through counter-storytelling. Several of the teachers stated that race was factor in how they were perceived and treated by their co-workers and administrative staff. Participant 2 stressed the importance of establishing a relationship with not only students, but also parents, colleagues, and the community because “The problems you have from the White administration won’t be as bad because the parents will come to bat for you.”

During the interviews, several participants challenged the fairness of the teacher assessments. They indicated that evaluations were racially biased and thus impact the process of recruiting teachers. Participant 3 said that “One of the biggest challenges is actually being hired.” He believed that candidates were chosen based on who they knew, rather than qualifications.

Participant 2 was more explicit about the racial disadvantages stated:

[Our] students are the students of parents who had problems in our school district and most of our teachers are still in the system. So they don’t care very much about the system. They tell their students not to care about the system and it is reflected in the behavior of the students in our school district. Therefore, it is a hard thing to motivate them...

All of the participants shared their experiences with racism, and how they dealt with them in different ways. The participant’s experiences, age and personal backgrounds were factors in how they perceived racism.

This study affirmed a desire by the participants to become teachers, with the intention of helping the next generation of Black students overcome the racist barriers they personally faced. This motivation is supported by “A close examination of the current state of education for African American males in PreK-12 schools [that] reveals that these students’ underachievement and disenfranchisement in schools and society seem to be reaching pandemic and life threatening proportions” (Howard, 2008, p. 956).

African Americans are more likely to live in urban low-income school districts that do not receive as much funding as wealthier areas. There is a direct correlation between funding and academic success. However, the ingrained racism in American society causes many to assume that African Americans lack intelligence and aptitude when they do not perform as well as their White counterparts on standardized testing. In reality, they are not competing on a level playing field. Assimilationist principles of teacher education tend to emphasize the values and behaviors of the White middle-class, rather than honoring that which is distinct and worthwhile within African American culture (Chapman, 2011).

Throughout history, African Americans have been considered property of White men. Freedom and rights are a relatively new revelation, and the process has often been colored more by words than deeds. Although African Americans are free, they face racial discrimination and setbacks that often cripple their chances at achieving wealth, social status or academic success. Within the system of education, it is rare to find African American male teachers. Because teachers design the courses based on their own experiences and knowledge of the topic, in a sense, they own the curriculum. If there are few African American male educators, there is less dissemination of their perspectives. “This institutional power further reinforces the notion that being White is more valuable and important than being a person of color” (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 55). Within this study, only one participant taught a core subject, while the others taught music and vocational education, or held a non-instructive role. The participants in this study wholeheartedly recommended that more African Americans should enter the teaching profession. They understood the significance of numbers equaling power within the academic world.

CRT “Crosses epistemological boundaries. It borrows from several traditions, including liberalism, law and society, feminism, Marxism, post structuralism, cultural nationalism, and

pragmatism” (Williams, 2011, p. 4). Many Americans consider affirmative action, No Child Left Behind, and other similar policies as proof of a societal desire to banish racism and create an atmosphere of equality. However, the principles of interest convergence suggest that “legal history serves as a precedent or social context for demonstrating how judicial relief for racism only occurs when it directly or indirectly furthers the best interest of the nation rather than the group that suffered the injustice” (Donnor, 2005. p. 58). Despite the emphasis on providing academic and career opportunities to minorities, affirmative action has been shown to provide the greatest benefit to White women, and accordingly, to White families (Hirald, 2010). African American men experience barriers to personal, social and educational success by the very policies that are established to foster freedom.

Recruitment efforts at the schools of participants are a form of interest convergence. Many African American male students do not participate in Teach for America or loan forgiveness programs, as compared to their White counterparts. The Caucasian college graduates benefit from teaching in predominant African American school districts and having their student loans forgiven from their career choice to become teachers for a short period of time.

Williams (2011), critiques liberalism as providing “dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self interest of powerful entities of society” (p. 4). While affirmative action helps some African Americans open the door to higher education, very few minorities are employed as professors at high-ranking universities (Chapman, 2011). Limited career opportunities translate to confined social and financial mobility.

Participants mentioned the existence of underlying social and cultural issues that prevented their students from engaging in positive behavior in the classroom. Participant 5 said,

It's hard for a hungry child to behave his or her best when all they can think about is getting some food ... I have at least six students who told me that the only food they get is what is given out at school, because the Food Stamps they are given don't last for a month, so their parents depend on them to eat as much as they can at school.

Hiraldo (2010) states that "Colorblindness is a mechanism that allows people to ignore racist policies that perpetuate social inequity" (p. 56). In order to create comprehensive change instead of an apparition of liberal words and ideas, campuses should engage in dialogue centered around increasing minority inclusion in all aspects of collegiate life. This would help African American men establish firmer footing to support careers in education.

Recommendations to the Field

For recruitment of African American male teachers to become meaningful and sustainable within school districts, the role of recruitment efforts may need redefining to address the needs of today's schools. Also, community colleges and universities need to become more involved in recruitment efforts in the public school. Local school systems have become more aware that having African American men in the teaching field is critical to student achievement and understand the importance of recruiting more African American male teachers. The growing diversity of public schools in the United States should serve as an impetus to increase recruiting efforts. The number of classroom teachers with 25+ years of experience displays the need to establish and implement recruitment and retention strategies. The development, implementation, and evaluation of school recruitment and retention plans are needed to enhance teacher-placement efforts. We must also explore other methods of exposing our students to diverse role models when African American male teachers are not available. Finally, at the school/district level, we must continue to encourage, support, and provide assistance as schools examine

traditional and new strategies for recruiting and retaining African American male teachers in the classroom.

Recommendations for Further Research

To recruit African American male educators and retain them, colleges and universities need to obtain funding for successful recruitment programs. The findings from this study indicate that geographic location impacted the likelihood of college attendance. Many rural communities lack local colleges, thereby requiring participants to leave home to obtain a college degree. I recommend that a quantitative study be conducted to investigate the correlation between distance from college and college attendance/graduate rates for African American men. This would help create a better understanding of additional challenges students from rural environments may face, and provoke a discourse on how to address the problem.

Future research should explore the barriers that African American men face with regard to becoming educators in the public school system. Additional interviews with a larger sample of participants, and comparing their responses to those in this relatively small study, would provide a more significant understanding of the subject. Ideally, this would lead to tactical reformation of the broken education system. The connection between lack of positive African American male role models and the miniscule ratio of African American educators must be recognized to institute a large-scale change in the public education system.

Conclusion

Education plays a key role in shaping youth and the direction their lives will take. This study has emphasized the impact teachers have on their students. It is vital for young people to be exposed to a variety of cultures and ethnicities throughout their academic career. Diversity encourages growth.

An examination of Black male teachers through the lens of Critical race theory allowed a more in-depth look at how “experiences with subordination can lead to a desire for liberation and hence an emancipatory teaching experience” (Lynn, 2001, p. 290). Because of their own personal struggles with racial inequality in the school systems, Black male teachers are more understanding and motivated to help African-American students succeed.

When analyzing the disadvantages that so many African American students face on a daily basis, the role of the African American teacher is even more important. Hunger and poverty place unnecessary burdens on these students, hindering academic and personal development. Positive African American role models in the school system are needed to dispel the hopelessness that statistics convey and help elevate the expectation that all children can succeed with determination and support. Qualified instructors can impart a strong knowledge base and skill set to be successful in our changing society. The presence of these educators is vital in closing the achievement gap between the African American men and our current society.

In the three schools in this study the African American male teachers are in high numbers due to the role models that they saw during their k-12 experience. In typical small rural communities there are very few professional African American males. In most cases the only professional African American male would have been within a student’s elementary or high school tenures.

Contributions to the Field of Education

In closing, this study is my contribution to knowledge about the recruitment and retention of African American male educators. It is my hope that the results will be made available so that our society and practitioners in education can have a greater understanding of the important role that African American male teachers play in changing the dynamics in public schools. African

American men are underrepresented in the educational profession due to (a) low salaries, (b) lack of eligible candidates, and (c) negative perceptions. Through the findings of the research study, African American male teachers have voiced and shared meaningful actions that should be considered to attract and retain more African American men in education. The actions are (a) positive feedback for being an educator (b) providing financial awards and incentives, and (c) keeping the community involved. The aggressive recruitment of African American male teachers will help motivate the academic achievement of Black students, thereby leading to a higher percentage of high school graduation, college completion, and ultimately a larger pool of teaching candidates for the next generation.

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Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

1. What or whom influenced you to become a teacher?
2. What are significant challenges you have faced since entering the teaching profession (i.e., low salary, no job security, too many discipline problems, etc.)
3. How did you go about entering the profession? Did you get a degree in teaching or was there another route taken?
4. Why did you select this route and what challenges did you encounter educationally when pursuing a career in teaching?
5. What are some job barriers that one may encounter that could hinder African American male teachers from being successful and keep them from staying in the field?
6. How can school districts across the United States encourage more African American men to teach?
7. Why do you think African American males do not enter the teaching profession at the same rate that African American women do?
8. If another African American male asked you if he should become a teacher, what would your answer be and why?
9. How has the identified barriers affected you mentally, emotionally, and physically, as you stayed in the profession?
10. Describe the impact that you have on African American male students in your classroom?

Appendix B: Consent Form

Title: Recruitment and Retention of Kindergarten Through Grade 12 African American Male Educators in A Rural Environment

Researcher: Shannon Lewis, University of Arkansas Graduate Student
XXXX XXXXX
XXXXXXXXXX, XX XXXXX
XXX-XXX-XXXX
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You are invited to take part in a research study entitled “Recruitment and Retention of Kindergarten Through Grade 12 African American Male Educators in A Rural Environment.” This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by Shannon Lewis, who is a doctoral student at the University of Arkansas. The research will examine the lived experiences of African American male K-12 teachers who have chosen to teach in a rural environments.

Procedures:

The study will be reviewed and approved by University of Arkansas’s Institutional Review Board. The intent of the study is to produce data that is relevant to helping school leadership what they need to do in order to encourage more African American males to teach. The study requires that participants take part in an interview in which they respond to questions about their lived experiences as an African American teacher. The interview will take no longer than 1 hour.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. There are no consequences for not participating in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind at any time during the study. You may stop at any time. There are no consequences for withdrawing from the study.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There is no foreseeable risk in voluntarily participating in the current research. The intent of the study is to produce data that is relevant to understanding what motivates an African American male to enter the teaching profession.

Payment

There is no compensation available for participating in this research.

Privacy:

All information provided by the participants will be held in a secure location by the researcher and the responses will not be used for any purposes outside of this academic research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any concerns about this study, contact Shannon Lewis or Dr. Carleton Holt by phone or email. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the researcher at any time

Confidentiality Agreement:

Participation in this study is voluntary and all data collected will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or company’s name in any reports of the study. The data will be presented in a coded manner, which will keep all names of participants confidential.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I am consenting to participating in the study.

Name (print)_____

Signature_____

Date_____

Appendix C: Invitation Letter

Invitation for Study Participation

Dear Colleague:

My name is Shannon Lewis and I am a student at the University of Arkansas University at Fayetteville. I am conducting a research study entitled, Recruitment and Retention of Kindergarten Through Grade 12 African American Male Educators in Rural Arkansas.

The purpose of this study is to answer the question: What barriers may prevent African American men from entering the teaching field, especially in rural impoverished areas?-This qualitative study will be used to add to the literature on the shortage of minority male teachers in the K-12 American school system, in particular in rural impoverished areas.

Your participation will consist of 1-hour interview about your experiences as an African American educator. The interview will take place at a convenient location and time for you. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so without penalty.

The results of the research study may be published but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be disclosed. Collected data will be stored in a secure and locked area. The data will be held for a period of 3 years, and then destroyed.

If you have any questions, you may contact the researcher, Shannon Lewis, at xxx-xxx-xxxx or feel free to email me at xxxxxx@hotmail.com.

Shannon Lewis

Doctoral Student

University of Arkansas at Fayetteville

Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter

January 28, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shannon Lewis
Carleton Holt

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #:13-01-411

Protocol Title: *Recruitment and Retention of Kindergarten through Grade 12 African American Male Educators in a Rural Environment*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 01/28/2013 Expiration Date: 01/27/2014

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 6 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.