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# Common Experiences African American Males Have En Route to Becoming Elementary Teachers

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COMMON EXPERIENCES AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES HAVE EN ROUTE TO  
BECOMING ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

by

CLEVELAND JOHNSON, III

(Under the Direction of James Green)

ABSTRACT

Male teachers are significantly under-represented in K-5 classrooms in relation to their presence in the general population; and, though male teachers in general are underrepresented, the disparity between the presence of Caucasian and African American males is even greater (Lewis, 2006). The under-representation of African American males as elementary teachers occurs because of barriers (Barnard, et al., 2000). By having a greater knowledge of the barriers black men face when entering elementary education universities and school districts can work to counter these barriers.

The researcher conducted 10 one-on-one interviews with African American male elementary teachers from school districts located within the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight concerning the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers. The interviews were audio taped and then transcribed. These transcripts were coded to identify recurring patterns and broader themes.

The researcher identified sources of support, sources of barriers, and methods of recruitment. In order of greatest frequency of occurrence to least the sources of support included the following: (1) knowledge of need/potential to impact students; lives, (2) positive educational experience, (3) intrinsic traits, and (4) family. In order of greatest

frequency of occurrence to least the sources of barriers included the following: (1) negative educational experience, (2) feminization of elementary education, (3) job prestige, and (4) compensation. In order of greatest frequency of occurrence to least the methods of recruitment perceived by the participants as most influential included the following: (1) advertisement of need/potential to impact students' lives, (2) early exposure to teaching (tied), (2) advertisement of benefits (tied), and (3) better compensation.

**INDEX WORDS:** African American male elementary teachers, Male teachers, Minority teachers, Teacher experiences, Diversity, Elementary school, African American, Career choice

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Electronic Version Approved:  
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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Loretta Mack Johnson, who instilled in me early on the importance and power of education. I love you.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many students will never have an African American male teacher while completing their formal elementary education. Though many educational systems tout the importance of diversity, few achieve this goal. There is substantial research concerning African American males and education, however the research unfortunately surrounds the same few topics. The topic most often studied is the fact that African American male students do not normally perform as well as their female counterparts (Lynn, 2006). Researchers have found the benefits of children being able to self-identify with the influential adult figures in their life (G. Brown, 2000; Howard, 1999). Contrary to this research, school districts do not succeed in recruiting African American males to teach in K-5 classrooms (Bolich & Southern Regional Education Board, 2003).

There is still an enormous deficit in the number of African American male teachers in K-5 classrooms. Males are significantly under-represented in K-5 classrooms in relation to their presence in the general population and though male teachers in general are underrepresented the disparity between the presence of Caucasian and African American males is even greater (Lewis, 2006). The under-representation of African American males as elementary teachers occurs because of barriers (Barnard et al., 2000). By having a greater knowledge of the barriers African American men face when entering elementary education universities and school districts can work to counter these barriers.

## **Background**

Educational research surrounding the topic of gender and race issues in education is vast. Many studies have focused on the plight of women in education. Research has given a voice to the gender issues of educating girls and the experiences that women have had in education (Gilson, 1999; Hutchinson & Ohio Univ, 1999). The development of conventional masculinity and femininity in schools has also been researched (Paechter, 2006).

Research has also publicized the problem of effectively educating African American males and the need to have more male teachers in classrooms across the nation (Cunningham & Watson, 2002; Roderick, 2003). The research that most closely addresses the under representation of males in teaching actually focuses on the recruitment of males into education (Cunningham & Watson, 2002), and more specifically the recruitment of African American males (J. W. Brown & Butty, 1999; Chmelynski, 2006).

Research has not yet focused specifically on African American male teachers in K-5 classrooms and their experiences. The purpose of this overview of literature is to set the foundation and give background information to support the study of the common experiences African American males have when entering elementary education as a career choice. This overview of literature will provide theoretical background for the research, the benefit of student-teacher relationships to African American male students and teachers, as well as common cultural conflicts experienced by African American teachers.



## **Theoretical Grounding**

Lynn (2006) cited Critical Race Theory as the most persuasive method of explaining why African American students do not perform as well as their white counterparts and choose not to enter the profession of teaching. “The intent of schools and schooling practices in white supremacist contexts has always been to serve and further support the unequal system of privileges conferred upon whites,” (Lynn, 2006, p. 116). If this is true, then it is easy to discern why African American male students do not perform well and why there are so few African American male teachers. Lynn further stated the logical explanation is because the early foundation of education in the United States was formed with the specific purpose of excluding African Americans. Lynn stated this inherent system of exclusion also contributes to African American students having a negative attitude towards school (Lynn, 2006). If African American students develop a negative attitude towards education when in school, many may hold this negative attitude when contemplating career choices.

Tyson (2002) noted that most of the research that states African American students have a negative attitude towards school was conducted while the students were adolescents. Tyson researched the attitudes toward school of elementary aged African American students and found that the majority of them had positive attitudes about school. Tyson recognized that her sample population came from middle to high income families and believed that economic factors may be a more meaningful influence on attitudes toward schools than race and culture. Tyson cautioned scholars from believing or insinuating that African American race and culture predestines academic failure or inferiority (Tyson, 2002). Tyson’s research provides information that might lessen the

validity that race and culture are dominant factors in the educational experience of students.

### **Student-Teacher Relationships**

Tillman (1992), an African American male, recounted an experiment he conducted in the late 1960s where he taught a group of sixth grade African American males while a female African American colleague taught a group of sixth grade African American females. Tillman found the experience to be more comfortable for himself and his students. The main areas where Tillman saw a positive difference when interacting with his male students were while at recess and when discipline issues arose. At recess Tillman was able to be directly involved with the sports his students wanted to play. In regard to discipline, Tillman felt he was able to discipline his male students while still showing them respect as males. Tillman also noted that many single mothers of students he taught shared that their son having an African American male teacher as a role model was very positive (Tillman, 1992). Tillman's experience clearly indicates that an African American male teacher with African American male students is positive for the teacher and some parents find it positive for their child.

Smith (2005) and Pigford (2001) both valued the importance of teacher-student relationships. In a qualitative study, Smith focused on methods to improve student teacher-relationships that help African American male students perform better in school. The most important factor to improve student-teacher relationships with African American male students is to have a genuine interest in them. "Students know which classmates matter the most to adults in a school, and which ones are treated unfairly," (Smith, 2005, p. 27). When developing a positive student-teacher relationship it is often

easier for the students of the same ethnicity as the teacher to create a strong bond because they share a similar cultural background.

Pigford (2001) agreed that showing compassion and interest in the student are the main goals of a positive teacher-student relationship. Pigford stated that often teachers lack the knowledge of a student's situation outside the school and, therefore, may handle various situations inappropriately causing the student-teaching relationship to become negative. It should be noted that Pigford, like Tillman, also found engaging in extracurricular activity with the students important (Pigford, 2001).

### **Cultural Conflicts**

While Tyson (2002) and Lynn (2002) focused on the experiences of students, Mabokela and Madsen (2003) focused on African American teachers in suburban schools. The sample population of this qualitative study was 14 teachers with both male and female teachers represented equally. Though the sample was small, many cultural conflicts were repeated when collecting data from the participants. The participants felt that because they were often the only African American in the school building, their main function in the school was to be the African American expert. The study also found that African American teachers in suburban schools felt pressure to prove they had expertise in their teaching field, "...because their expertise is often questioned by their European American colleagues, as well as by their students' parents," (Mabokela & Madsen, 2003, p. 108). The questioning of the knowledge held by African American teachers by other white teachers and parents in this study could support the Critical Race Theory view held by Lynn. Mabokela and Madsen added significantly to the answer of what barriers African American teachers face when choosing a career and once entering the teaching

field. Their findings reiterated that minorities in any setting often feel marginalized by the majority.

Researchers employing Critical Race Theory inform educational research on the attitudes and values regarding education held by African American males (Lynn, 2002). Most significant is the point that attitudes and values are derived more from the culture of poverty than they are race (Tyson, 2002). There is research concerning African American male teachers once they enter education (G. Brown, 2000). However, research is missing on the experiences these educators have en route to their career choice. Logically, the better educational leaders understand these experiences the more effective they can become in addressing the problem of so few African American male teachers in elementary schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research has shown that African American males may be predisposed to negative attitudes toward the field of education. These feelings may be derived from how schools were designed in the colonial period of America which was for the sole purpose of educating young white males. Researchers have studied actions that produce both positive and negative student-teacher relationships. Researchers have also concluded African American students who have an African American teacher have better experiences in education as noted by their teachers and parents.

Educational research concerning African Americans is abundant; however, the research often is very broad and concerning the same few topics. Though the goal often is to increase the academic achievement of African American students or to increase the number of African American teachers, neither has been achieved. Therefore, the purpose

of this study is to identify common supportive experiences as well as common barriers faced by African American males en route to becoming elementary teachers.

### **Research Questions**

When examining the experiences of African American males elementary teachers the researcher will be guided by the following overarching question: What common experiences do African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers?

The following sub-questions will be used to answer the overarching question:

Sub-question 1: Of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do these males identify as supportive?

Sub-question 2: How do African American males use these self-identified supportive experiences as guidance towards becoming an elementary teacher?

Sub-question 3: Of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do African American males identify as barriers?

Sub-question 4: How do African American males overcome these self-identified barriers?

### **Significance of the Study**

Research concerning African Americans and education often sprawls across several levels of teaching or spans several aspects of education. By targeting a specific group of teachers, African American males, at a specific level of teaching, elementary, the findings will be more significant to a particular segment of educational research. In addition there is evidence that students perform better academically when they are taught

by a teacher of their own race (Tillman, 2001). The academic performance improvement of minorities as early as possible is critical to narrowing the achievement gap; especially considering the number of African American male high school drop-outs exceeds any other demographic group (Martin & Halperin, 2006).

Unlike previous research, this research study is significant because it will inform educational leaders on the experiences African American male elementary teachers have when entering the profession. The findings of this study may help recruitment efforts aimed towards African American male elementary teachers. In turn, the possible increase in number of African American male elementary teachers could narrow the achievement gap and reduce the number of African American male high school drop-outs.

## **Research Procedures**

### **Research Design**

The nature of this study required a qualitative approach. Since the research questions sought to explore the lived experiences of African American males who chose careers as teachers in elementary grades, a phenomenological study was conducted. Phenomenology was an appropriate method for investigating the essence of experiences as described by participants (Creswell, 2003; Glesne 2006). The researcher gathered data for the study via one-on-one interview with each participant. These interviews took place in a natural environment of each participant's choosing to remove variables that may hinder open and detailed responses.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study consisted of 10 African American male elementary school teachers. The participants were purposefully selected because the study was

targeted towards a specific group of educators. The total number of accessible African American elementary teachers is minuscule, which was not conducive to random sampling (Lewis, 2006). In addition, purposeful sampling is appropriate for a qualitative study (Creswell, 2003; Patton 2002).

### **Instrumentation**

Data were collected via interviews. A standard interview protocol was developed. Face validity for the interview was established through a pilot interview with a focus group of participants with similar experiences as those who were included in the study.

### **Data Collection**

Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-taped. Each participant was assigned a number which was used to identify the audiotape of their interview. The name associated with each participant was kept in a secure location accessible only by the researcher to ensure confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

Word-processed transcripts were prepared from the audio-taped interviews of each participant. The transcripts were then be analyzed using three levels of coding as recommended by Coffey and Atkinson (1996). The initial level was dedicated to finding recurring patterns in the participants' narratives. Next, these recurring patterns were coded into broader themes. Last, these themes were used to draw conclusions concerning the research and to answer the research question and its sub-questions. To ensure accuracy of the findings, the participants were allowed to review the analysis of their interview. Any discrepancy in the interpretation of the data that could not be resolved was noted in the findings section of the research.

### **Limitations/Delimitations**

There are very few accessible African American male elementary teachers, which limits the accessibility of the sample. Therefore the researcher chose to increase the geographic sampling area to include school districts within the Atlanta metropolitan area. The participants may not have felt comfortable sharing their experiences with the researcher. This may have been manifested through the participants withholding personal experience or by only stating information they believed the researcher wanted to hear. To counteract participants withholding or providing false information, the researcher reiterated to the participants that their statements would remain confidential and that their openness would be beneficial to the research. However, the researcher assumed that all participants were open and honest in their responses. Also, given that the study is qualitative, any findings are limited to the participants and their settings alone.

The study was restricted to school districts in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia. The school districts in the Atlanta metropolitan area employ teachers from every state and even some foreign countries. They are located in both urban and suburban areas and serve a wide demographic and socioeconomic range of students. The diversity of the areas teaching workforce represented a broad range of experiences and backgrounds by the participants. This geographic delimitation was necessary to facilitate participation in the study. The participants in the study were restricted to African American male elementary teachers. By focusing on only elementary educators, the findings of the study were targeted to a specific segment of African American males who work in the field of education. These participants were chosen because only their experiences could answer the research questions and sub-questions.



## **Chapter Summary**

Research concerning African Americans and education has informed educational leaders about the plight of both African American students and teachers. Previous research has proposed Critical Race Theory as a method of explaining recurring negative phenomena as well as negated its validity. The benefits of males in education have been noted in many instances along with the difficulty of recruiting males in general, especially at the elementary level. This study examined the common experiences and barriers African American males faced en route to becoming elementary teachers. To accurately report and analyze the participants' experience the study was phenomenological. Data were collected via interviews and transcribed. The transcripts were coded into common themes that were used to draw conclusions and answer the overarching question and its sub-questions.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

Elementary education is a student's first formal academic experience; and arguably, this experience lays the foundation for the student's success in formal schooling. However, in addition to the explicit curriculum, a student experiences an informal education as well. For example, during this crucial developmental period students are learning about both race and gender identities. Moreover, a close examination of race and gender demographics in elementary schools reveals what they might be learning. Eighty-six percent of teachers are female and 42% of all public schools have no minority teachers. Only 9% of all elementary teachers are male and less than 2% of them work in grades pre-kindergarten to third (Milloy, 2003; Gordon, 2000; Wiest, 2003). African American students comprise 20% of public school population while African American teachers only represent 1% of the teaching force (Lewis, 2006). Though, learning should be separate from the teacher's gender and race, human nature makes this impossible (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Minority students are inundated with societal values and norms as viewed through the experiences of mostly Caucasian female teachers (King, 1993; Shure, 2001).

To provide students with a well rounded view of the world, greater diversity in the educational workforce both in the realm of gender and ethnicity is needed (King, 1993; Shure, 2001). This review of literature provides a historical account of African American experiences in education, research concerning experiences that influence the career choices of minority teachers, and recruitment efforts for attracting minority

teachers. Each of these areas will be further delineated to focus specifically on males. Sources cited in the review of literature were selected with priority given to empirical studies and located using specific search strategies.

### **Search Strategies**

The researcher used several different methods to locate literature relevant to the topic. The search terms used to conduct the most comprehensive search included the following “African American male teachers,” “male teachers elementary,” “African American education career choice,” “African American education attitudes,” and “African American education history of.” Several of the search phrases were also reorganized and amended to increase the number of results or to narrow the focus of the search.

Georgia Southern University provided access to GALILEO (Georgia Library Learning Online), where more than 100 databases may be accessed and over 2000 journal titles are available in full text. Most often articles from referred journals were sought from the following multi-disciplinary databases Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, and ProQuest. Through GIL (GALILEO Interconnected Libraries) Express, the researcher was also able to obtain books relevant to the research topic not owned by Georgia Southern University but located within the University System of Georgia. The researcher also found other articles by reviewing bibliographies of related research. Often these articles or books were not available via GALILEO or GIL Express. The researcher was able to obtain these articles and books through ILLiad (Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery), which connects the libraries of several universities across the nation.

## **History of the Education of African Americans**

Anderson (1988) and Bullock (1967) have provided a thorough historical account of the education of African Americans in the South. Prior to the freeing of slaves, wealthy white plantation owners provided minimal education to poor whites as charity. Freed slaves became the first southerners to pursue universal education provided by government. The plantation owners became the strongest opponents of universal schooling.

According to Anderson (1988), ex-slaves were eager to learn to read and write and they actively sought out other African Americans who were literate to teach them. However, many ex-slaves had no desire to be taught by a white person but were willing to accept limited support and guidance in establishing their own schools. As a white missionary teacher stated, "They have a natural praiseworthy pride in keeping their educational institutions in their own hands. There is a jealousy of the superintendence of the white man in this matter. What they desire is assistance without control," (Anderson, 1988, p. 5).

As time passed and with assistance of northern whites, ex-slaves established schools for themselves. Whites began to realize these schools were not temporary and began to contemplate how they could be modified to benefit southern white culture. Anderson (1988) stated, "Proponents of southern industrialization increasingly viewed mass schooling as a mean to produce efficient and contented labor an as a socialization process to instill in black and white children an acceptance of the southern racial hierarchy," (p.27). Consequently, efforts began to restructure the curriculum offered to black students rather than eradicate it.

This new curriculum, developed by whites, known as industrial education or the Hampton model was starkly different from the freedman's curriculum. The freedman's curriculum designed by ex-slaves was meant to uplift them from oppression by becoming literate. While literacy was part of the Hampton-Tuskegee model its truer purpose was to prepare black teachers to teach black students to be subservient to whites, efficient workers, and that hard labor, mostly manual, is expected of them (Anderson, 1988). One of the main developers and supporters of the Hampton-Tuskegee model was a former slave named Booker T. Washington (Anderson, 1988).

Some whites, however, did not agree that blacks could be formally schooled to believe that whites innately had the right to rule them. In addition, some blacks did not agree with the new curriculum. W.E.B. Du Bois, an African American graduate of Fisk University and prominent scholar, rebuked the Hampton-Tuskegee model and argued that blacks were better served by learning the freeman's curriculum (Bullock, 1967). Bullock (1967) stated, "Both the industrial schools like Hampton and Tuskegee and the liberal arts schools like Atlanta and Fisk were engaged in the task of Negro education. The two types of schools educated Negro youth for different classes within the same caste system," (p.85).

Supporters of universal education for blacks in the south, regardless of its purpose, realized that the number of black students needing schooling could not be supported with the limited number of black teachers. Anderson (1988) reported, "In 1900 in the sixteen former slave states there were 26,770 black teachers for the 2,485,737 black children ages five through eighteen, or one black teacher for every 93 black children of school age," (p.111). White southern teachers would not teach black students

and the supply of northern white teachers willing to move to south was limited. In order to remedy the lack of black teachers, white philanthropists began to organize training schools. These schools were designed to increase the number of black teachers by offering a shortened program of study and while still promoting the Hampton-Tuskegee model, (Anderson, 1988).

According to Anderson (1988), once enough teachers were trained, the next obstacle for blacks in the south was to establish secondary schools. Again southern whites did not support establishing black high schools, though from 1880 to 1935 there was push across the nation for free public high schools for white children. Oddly, the Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) dictum of "separate, but equal" did not apply to Black high schools. A decision in the Supreme Court case of Cumming v. School Board of Richmond County (1899), Georgia ruled that the school board did have the right to close the only Black high school in the state at the time and use its budget to fund additional Black elementary schools. In essence, the Supreme Court agreed that the county did not have to offer separate but equal secondary school for black students.

Anderson (1988) stated the following:

This oppression of black schoolchildren during the critical stage of the transformation of American secondary education seriously affected the long-term development of education in the black community and was one of the fundamental reasons that the educational progress of black Americans lagged far behind that of other Americans. (p.237)

Anderson's (1988) and Bullock's (1967) account of the participation of blacks in education indicates that once freed, slaves were intensely driven to be educated. Blacks did not want to entrust their education to whites and were determined to create schools for themselves. However, whites became threatened by the potential of blacks becoming

equally educated and devised a new curriculum to be taught in exchange for aid in establishing black schools. The curriculum developed by whites was designed to institutionalize the belief that whites had a right to rule over blacks. As Anderson (1988) stated, “The education of blacks in the South reveals that various contending forces sought either to repress the development of black education or to shape it in ways that contradicted blacks’ interests in intellectual development,” (p.285). The struggle of blacks to attain education, as well as its use by whites as tool to systemically establish a class system based on race, may have had long-term effects on the career choices of African Americans and their participation in education.

### **Statistical Trends of African American Teachers**

The number of African American teachers has significantly decreased over time (Jackson, 2001). The most pivotal event that coincides with this decrease is the decision of *Brown v. the Board of Education* (Fultz, 2004). Though the ruling was a pivotal point in the civil rights for African Americans, the future detrimental effect of desegregation on African American teachers could not be foreseen. As illustrated in the Table 2.1, from 1982 to 2000 the total number of African American teachers decreased by 12.2%.

Table 2.1

*Percentage of African American Teachers in 1982, 1996, and 2000*

Occupation	1982	1996	2000
Elementary Teachers	12.2	9.8	-
Secondary Teachers	9.4	9.1	-
Total	21.6	18.9	9.4

*Note.* Teacher decrease. Adapted from *African American education: a reference book* (p 32.), by C. L. Jackson, 2001, Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO. Copyright 2009 by Cynthia L. Jackson.

The United States Census Bureau periodically gathers data on the demographics of the American teachers. The data collected by the Census Bureau indicates that the majority of teachers are white females. Further analysis shows the disproportionately low representation of males and African American teachers. As illustrated in Table 2.2, 80.10% of teachers are white and 65.40% female as compared to 9.40% being African American and 34.60% being male. In the year 2000 only 2.90% of all teachers were African American males. Table 2.3 further illustrates this lack of diversity, during the 2003-2004 school year 81.6% of elementary teachers were white, while African Americans represented only at 8.8% of the elementary teacher population.

Table 2.2

*Demographics of Teachers in the United States by Race and Gender, 2000*

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other	Total
Male	28.00%	2.90%	1.90%	.90%	.90%	34.60%
Female	52.10%	6.50%	3.90%	1.50%	1.40%	65.40%
Total	80.10%	9.40%	5.80%	2.40%	2.30%	100.00%

*Note.* Teacher percentages. Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

Table 2.3

*Teacher Demographics in Public Elementary Schools, 2003-2004*

Race	Percentage
White	81.6%
Black	8.8%
Hispanic	7.0%
Asian	1.3%
Other	1.3%

*Note.* Elementary teacher demographics. Adapted from *The SAGE Handbook of African American Education* (p 127.), by L. C. Tillman (Ed.), 2009, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. Copyright 2009 by Linda C. Tillman.

In addition, these trends did not only affect African American teachers but also African American students. Dee (2001) found that students' achievement was increased



in both reading and math when they were taught by a teacher of the same race.

Therefore, the lack of these teachers contributes to diminished student achievement. As illustrated in Table 2.4, both white and black students performed better in reading and math when taught by a teacher of their own race.

Table 2.4

*Student Achievement by Student and Teacher Race*

Student Variable	White Students		Black Students	
	Teacher of Own Race	Teacher of Other Race	Teacher of Own Race	Teacher of Other Race
Math Score	56.7	50.0	40.7	37.6
Reading Score	56.9	51.5	39.9	37.6
Small Class	.31	.29	.30	.27
Female Student	.48	.48	.50	.49
Born Before 1980	.36	.38	.35	.37
Free Lunch	.33	.33	.82	.81
Sample Size	15,033	922	3,542	4,386

*Note.* Student achievement data. Reprinted from “Teachers, race, student achievement in a randomized experiment,” by T. S. Dee, 2001, National Bureau of Economic Research Working Papers Series. Copyright 2001 by Thomas S. Dee.

### **Experiences that Influence a Male’s Choice to Enter Teaching**

#### **The Decline in the Number of African American Teachers**

Before the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*, schools were segregated and naturally African American students were taught by African American teachers. Though the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* was meant to enhance the educational opportunities of African American students, there were detrimental effects to the future number of African Americans choosing to become teachers (Fultz, 2004).

According to Fultz (2004), from 1954 to 1972 approximately 31,584 African American teachers, including those who had tenure, were demoted or released from their teaching positions without notice or reason. Many of these teachers chose not to

challenge their termination for fear of retaliation by white people in the community. In addition to the white majority reducing the number of African American teachers in-service, there also was a practice to not hire new African American teachers (Fultz, 2004). These practices together led to a great decrease in the number of African American teachers across the United States.

Though Fultz (2004) cited historical data that clearly shows a decrease in the number of African American teachers post the *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision, the data do not fully define the problem. Fultz did not explicitly provide a reason for the continued African American lack of interest in teaching. The traumatic experience of job loss and non-hiring post *Brown v. the Board of Education* has reverberated through many generations leading to continued lack of interest in the profession of teaching. However, this can be easily negated because fields of occupations have seen an increase in the employment of African American even though they were at one time segregated as well.

Milloy (2003) has elaborated upon Fultz's research by observing another barrier that has deterred African Americans from becoming teachers. The teacher certification and licensing exam failure rate is disproportionately higher for minorities (Milloy, 2003). Though African Americans may have the desire, certification requirements often prevent many from entering the field. It is important to consider that the designs of these tests, similar to the non-hiring practices cited by Fultz, are in place purposely to keep many minorities out of the field of education (Lynn, 2006; Milloy, 2003,).

### **Influences of Career Choice**

Most teachers, including those who are African American, do not enter teaching for monetary gain (Milloy, 2003). More often, teachers state that impacting the lives of

students and knowing their influence goes far beyond the year they spend with each student in the classroom draws them to teaching (Milloy, 2003). Specifically, African American teachers often state they were aware of the need to be in schools to serve children who resembled them (Brown, 2002; Milloy, 2003). Many African American teachers find duality in their careers as both teacher and role model, some even consider themselves surrogate mothers or fathers for African American children who have unstable home lives (Brown, 2002).

Brown's (2002) qualitative study concerning occupational choice highlighted both a benefit and barrier of African American educators. Many African American educators know their presence is needed in the classroom, but often they have to face added pressures unrelated to teaching (Brown, 2000). Brown has provided insight on how race can influence career choice in positive manner, but he failed to provide information relating to any hesitations these same African American teachers may have experienced. The value of the study could have been greatly increased if both points of view were examined.

### **Experiences Based on Being Male**

The paucity of male elementary teachers is a phenomenon that is not limited to a specific race or the United States of America. Foster and Newman (2005) and Skelton (2003) studied the experiences of male teachers of primary students (ages 4-11) in the United Kingdom, exploring reasons to explain their scarcity. While Sumison (2000) researched how Australian men navigated being both male early childhood teachers and masculine in an occupation dominated by females.

Foster and Newman (2005) collected data via interviews over a four year period 1998-2002 from several focus groups each composed of approximately 12 male primary teachers. Skelton (2003) completed a mixed method study that surveyed 210 participants, 118 of whom were male using a five point Likert scale and open-ended questions. He concluded that most of the male teachers had similar hesitations about entering teaching at the elementary level. In a separate investigation that utilized case study, Sumsion (2000) reached a similar conclusion. However, Sumsion focused on how a male teacher copes with negative social pressure when choosing to become an elementary teacher.

The participants in all three studies (Foster & Newman, 2005; Skelton, 2003; Sumsion, 2000) expressed concerned about working in a field traditionally thought to be meant for women. Many expressed that female colleagues did not believe male teachers were capable of providing the nurturing a young child needed. Moreover, participants voiced their perceptions that female colleagues and parents might assume that male teachers who appeared caring were possibly either pedophiles or homosexuals, both being viewed as dangerous to children (Foster & Newman, 2005; Skelton, 2003). As Foster and Newman observed, “The culture of a primary school sets up certain expectation of teachers...This narrow essentialist view of teaching is alien to men’s normative experience,” (p. 354).

Sumsion (2000) addressed how men may balance being both male and a primary teacher. Like the majority of society, Sumsion’s participant had an essentialist view of gender. He reported that gender roles can be clearly defined. Therefore, occupations also have characteristics that are innately masculine and meant for men or are innately

feminine and meant for women. The participant in Sumsion's case study stated that he balanced his contradicting identity of both being a male and a primary school teacher by either accentuating or minimizing his masculinity, depending upon the situation. When Bill felt it was necessary, he reminded the parents of his students and co-workers that he was married and had children. Bill went out of his way to portray himself as "normal," since it was obvious that he had a job that society considered was meant for women. Bill also stated that he believed being a man in a highly feminized workspace was beneficial and, at times, emphasized his masculine qualities in front of his employers in order to gain recognition.

Sumsion (2000) explored how Bill engaged and disengaged his masculinity to best serve him while he has working as a primary teacher; however, this was only a singular account. Sumsion's case study is not generalizable. Foster and Newman (2005) and Skelton (2003) collected data from a multitude of sources, which strengthens the usefulness of these studies. The longitudinal data collected by Foster and Newman (2005) observed trends over time. Their use of several focus groups also strengthened their claims of recurring experiences and themes among their participants. In addition, the mixed method approach utilized by Skelton (2003) provided statistical data that also supports the qualitative findings which adds another dimension and a considerable amount of depth.

### **Recruitment**

The lack of male elementary teachers is a phenomenon that has been clearly observed in the United States and abroad (Foster & Newman, 2005; Milloy, 2003; Skeleton, 2003; Sumsion, 2000). In addition, the under-representation of African

American teachers is well documented in American schools (Lewis, 2006, Milloy, 2003). In order to remedy these situations, several recruitment efforts are in place to increase gender and racial diversity in the teaching work force. Statistics show these efforts, however have not made a substantial change in the teaching workforce due to the many obstacles they face (Lewis, 2006; Milloy, 2003).

### **African American Teacher Recruitment Efforts and Obstacles**

In order to effectively recruit racial minorities into teaching, it is important to be aware of the obstacles. The main reasons typically cited for low minority participation in teaching are inferior compensation, lack of financial assistance to attend college, and difficulty passing teaching certification exams (Gordon, 2000; Jacullo-Noto, 1991; King, 1993; Milloy, 2003; Okezie, 2003). However, close examination of the research shows other factors come into play.

Gordon (2000) explored these seemingly simple deterrents to African Americans entering teaching more deeply. When Gordon interviewed in-service African American teachers, the most common response to explain why more African Americans do not entering teaching was because of inferior compensation. “Even though low pay was the most immediate reason given by more than half of the teachers for students of color’s resistance to teaching careers, most of more thoughtful responses actually countered this prevailing view,” (Gordon, 2000, p.24). Several of the teachers explained that their salary was satisfactory when their work hours, job security, and other benefits were taken into account. The reason they felt teaching was categorized as low salary job was because it was the only way for unions to pressure school boards into paying teachers more.

Shipp (1999) completed a quantitative study of the factors that influence the career choices of African American college students in hopes of designing more effective teacher recruitment programs. The sample consisted of 263 students with 52% being education majors and 33% of the sample being male. When asked to rank factors that affect career choice, the education major consistently ranked salary as less important than their contribution to society.

Shipp (1999) and Gordon (2000) both presented similar information. They found that salary is not an important factor in the decision to become a teacher or remain a teacher. “Both education and non-education majors frequently underestimate the current salary levels of teachers in their own state,” (Shipp, 1999, p. 348). The low salary explanation seemingly has been fueled by outside influences and has become a common societal belief. An effective recruitment program would need to address low salary falsehood to attract minorities who overlook teaching because of its supposed low salary.

In relation to lack of financial assistance for college, Gordon found that it is more accurate to state African Americans did not believe the financial return of teaching was comparable to the cost of education. On interviewee stated, “When the economic system was more intact, you made more money the more education you had. Nowadays, a mechanic earns more than a teacher, so why should kids want to go to college,” (Gordon, 2000, p.27). The view that other occupations are more viable than teaching was also explored.

Some researchers believe that because racial inequality has greatly decreased over time the opportunity for African Americans to enter other professions has increased. This increased choice has lead to a decline in the interest of African American entering

teaching (Gordon, 2000; Shipp, 1999). As a participant stated, “If you are a first-generation college student, your parents have such high hopes and expectations. Why would you subject yourself to teaching when there are so many other interesting fields,” (Gordon, 2000 p. 28). Gordon stated this quotation from an African American woman contains underlying messages. According to this participant, teaching is viewed as something that must be endured as suggested by the phrase “Why would you subject yourself,” and again teaching is viewed as job that is not prestigious.

Shipp (1999) found all participants, regardless of major, ranked job prestige as an unimportant factor when choosing a career. However, participants who majored in a non-education field ranked “advancement opportunities” as the most important factor in choosing a career while education majors chose “contribution to society” as the most important factor. These data highlight the belief that teaching does not have many opportunities for advancement, which also relates the belief that a teaching career is not a profitable career in relation to the cost of a college education.

Gordon’s qualitative study provided deeper insight into the underlying perceptions racial minorities have towards teaching that promote them towards or prevent them from considering teaching as career. However, the narratives of these participants are only applicable to themselves and their experiences.

Shipp’s (1999) quantitative study allowed participants to rank order a predetermined list of factors that influence career choice. The investigation helped put into focus the reasons given by African American for not choosing teaching as a career, but the instrument utilized greatly limited the kinds of responses that the participants could give.



Haberman (1999) and King (1993) suggested that the number of African American teachers can be increased by recruiting from the metropolitan areas with a large African American population. Haberman stated that these areas provide an abundant source of career changers who may be interested in education. In a study that focused on participants who graduated from the Metropolitan Milwaukee Teacher Education Program (MMTEP), an alternative teacher preparation program, Haberman found that MMTEP prepared 78% of the minority teachers. Further, Haberman found that 94% of these teachers stayed in the district of at least 10 years and that principals found that that 96% of teacher prepared by MMTEP performed either satisfactory or exemplary. Though these statistics are remarkable, they fail to take into account the fact that the participants were actively seeking another career. Nonetheless, Haberman provided an abundance of evidence to support alternative preparation programs working well to recruiting and retaining African American teachers.

King (1993), contrary to Haberman (1999), stated that historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have always been one of the greatest sources of African American teachers. After desegregation, the number of teachers produced by HBCUs has continued to decrease drastically (King, 1993; Fultz, 2004). King (1993) observed, “In 1974, HCBUs graduated 9,051 African American teachers. But, in 1981, they graduated only 4,027,” (p.133). Knowing the strong role HBCUs traditionally played in the production of African American teachers, King suggested promoting teaching in this at these colleges and universities would be the most effective method of increasing the number of African American teachers.

## **Male Teacher Recruitment Efforts and Obstacles**

The need for males to enter teaching especially at the elementary process has been noted by researchers as early as 1953. At that time only one in sixteen elementary teachers were male or 6.25% (Rogers, 1953). Fifty-years later only 9% of elementary teachers were male, a 2.75% increase (Milloy, 2003). This rate of improvement highlights the difficulty of recruiting males to become teachers.

The historical perspective provided by Rogers' (1953) study of 40 Caucasian male elementary teachers prior to *Brown v. the Board of Education* is valuable in comparing and contrasting current male recruitment efforts without relation to race. Nonetheless, these male participants held similar sentiments as the participants in the studies of Gordon (2000) and Shipp (1999), which focused on recruiting racial minorities rather than males.

Rogers' study was completed using a questionnaire and open-ended questions that allowed the participants further expression and clarification. Ninety-seven percent of the participants felt more men were needed in elementary education. Unlike like the participants in the studies of Gordon (2000) and Shipp (1999), 70% of the participants did feel that being a teacher held an amount of prestige. However, according to Wiest (2003), the prestige of teaching may have been lost due to increased access to other occupations.

Wiest (2003) stated the low status perception of teaching may negatively impact men greater than women and men may view teaching as similar to baby-sitting. DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) stated, "Characterizing the classroom teacher as female, subservient, and second-rate makes it unlikely that males will choose teaching, even when

predisposed to do so...Men moving into traditionally female jobs are perceived as stepping down in status,” (p. 38). The belief that teaching is low in status is held by both racial and gender and minorities.

Rogers (1953) suggested that though men are a minority in elementary education, their concerns are no different than those that affect female teachers. Rogers (1953) further stated to effectively recruit male teachers into education; male teachers should unite with women to improve the teaching condition for all teachers. This suggestion has either not been followed or has failed considering the dismal rate at which males have entered elementary teaching since the completion of the study.

Wiest (2003) provided other strategies that may help increase the number of males who choose to become a teacher. He proposed that advertising that diminishes many of the myths associated with teaching could help society develop a better understanding of teaching. Career days and prospective trips to colleges of education for male students could increase the number of male teachers. Golias (1990) suggested these types of recruitment trips should start as early as middle school. In addition to early recruitment, men may need “special preparation to face those issues unique to their gender, especially challenges to and suspicion about their motives, abilities, and sexuality,” (Wiest, 2003, p. 69).

Again the need for male teachers and recruitment efforts are not isolated to the United States. Mills, Martino, and Lingard (2004) studied male teacher recruitment efforts in Australia. Mills et al. critiqued male recruitment efforts in Australia that minimize the effects of gender on how male function in schools, as well as how they are perceived by others as teachers. Similar to Foster and Newman (2005), Mill et al. argued

that males will only enter education when many social constructs regarding the contradiction of being a teacher and masculine have been demolished.

### **African American Male Teacher Recruitment**

Teacher recruitment aimed at either African Americans or males would ideally increase the number of African American male teachers. Statistics have shown, however, that these recruitment efforts have not been effective (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). To recruit specifically African American males into teaching recommendations have been made and a program begun.

Brown and Butty (1999) completed a quantitative study that sought to find the factors that influenced African American male teachers' career choices. They focused on the variables of background, undergraduate college experience, qualification, and motivation. They sent a survey to 717 African American male teachers in the Prince George County Public School System, but only achieved a return rate of 20% (N=140). Brown and Butty later discovered 30% of the 717 teachers no longer worked in the school system. Using regression analyses, the researchers found that the two most significant factors that influenced African American male teachers' career choice were the desire to impart knowledge and their undergraduate major. Brown and Butty (1999) further recommended that these two factors be incorporated into the recruitment of other African American male teachers.

In 1999, a systematic method of recruitment began in South Carolina. The program was collaboration among Clemson University, Benedict College, Claflin College, Morris College, and Voorhees College called "Call Me MISTER" (Smiles, 2002). The program sought to recruit and train 200 African American males to become

elementary teachers in South Carolina's public school systems. As incentives it provided its participants with tuition assistance, academic support, and cohort style learning to aid in the successful completion of the teacher preparation program (Smiles, 2002).

### **Chapter Summary**

The review of literature has provided information concerning the history, experiences, influences, obstacles, and recruitment efforts of both male and African American teachers. The literature concerning the history of black education was compiled from archival records. Research concerning male teachers was largely survey research. Literature focusing on African American teachers was mostly qualitative in nature. Moreover, investigations focused on male elementary teachers were severely limited and literature focused solely on recruitment of African American elementary teachers was not found. The major findings of this review of literature follow.

Ex-slaves knew education could prevent further oppression. They sought education feverishly and wanted autonomy over their curriculum. Whites seeking to preserve their caste system implemented the Hampton-Tuskegee model. In addition to the Hampton-Tuskegee model, Whites tried to deny Blacks access to secondary education. This continued delay and denial of educational access may have been detrimental to the achievements and participation of African Americans in education (Anderson, 1988; Bullock, 1967).

African American and male teachers both faced numerous obstacles when entering teaching. Post-desegregation, African Americans often have faced difficulty enrolling into college and passing teacher certification exams. These difficulties may be a cloaked systematic means to keep African Americans and other minorities out of the

field of education (Lynn, 2006; Fultz, 2004). King (1993) suggested therefore, African American teachers be recruited via HBCUs and metropolitan areas where African Americans may be interested in changing careers. African Americans who succeeded at becoming teachers often cite a moral or intrinsic motivation for entering teaching such as to become a role model for minority students.

The recruitment of males into teaching is difficult for several reasons. Teaching, being a highly feminized occupation, often negatively influences males who may be predisposed to teaching from pursuing it as a career (DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). The feminization of teaching is not isolated to the United States but a global phenomenon and exists in the United Kingdom and Australia (Foster & Newman, 2005; Skelton, 2003; Sumsion, 2000). Male teachers often feel their gender places their personal and professional attributes under intense scrutiny. Coping with this scrutiny causes some males to engage and disengage their masculinity depending upon what they feel is most appropriate and beneficial in a given situation. Recruitment efforts of male teachers often focus on the importance of male teachers and dismissing teaching as work for women.

The need for male and minority teachers has been documented numerous times. Unfortunately, the recruitment efforts of male and African American teachers are not effective, as several investigations have concluded. The majority of America's teachers are still Caucasian females and the American teaching force does not reflect the diversity of its student population. Until teaching is viewed as a gender neutral profession and its diversity more representative of its student population, educational research on this phenomenon will continue. Perhaps focusing more narrowly a specific segment, African American male elementary teachers, will provide more rich and insightful data. In

particular there is a lack of understanding of the barriers and supportive experiences which affect African American male choice to become elementary teachers.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences African American males had en route to becoming elementary teachers and those factors that positively and negatively influenced their career choice. To explore these experiences in-depth, the study was phenomenological in nature. The phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to grasp the essence of lived experiences (Creswell, 2003; Glesne, 2006). This chapter includes details concerning the research design, participants, instrumentation, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

#### **Research Questions**

As previously stated, research concerning African Americans and education often sprawls across several levels of teaching or spans several aspects of education. By targeting a specific group of teachers, African American males, at a specific level of teaching, elementary, the findings will be more significant to a particular segment of educational research. Unlike previous research, this research study is significant because it informs school based educational leaders on the experiences African American male elementary teachers have when entering the profession. This study also informs those involved with teacher preparation programs about the experiences particular to African American males who are seeking teaching credentials.

The researcher considered the following overarching question in this study: What common experiences do African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers? The following sub-questions were used to answer the overarching question:



Sub-question 1: Of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do these males identify as supportive?

Sub-question 2: How do African American males use these self-identified supportive experiences as guidance towards becoming an elementary teacher?

Sub-question 3: Of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do African American males identify as barriers?

Sub-question 4: How do African American males overcome the self-identified barriers?

## **Research Procedures**

### **Research Design**

The nature of this study required a qualitative approach. Qualitative design was needed to focus on understanding how social context affects a particular phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), in this case the career choice of African American male elementary teachers. Qualitative research pivots on the relationship between the researcher and his participants (Denzin & Lincoln). Since the research questions sought to explore the lived experiences of African American males who chose careers as teachers in elementary grades, a phenomenological study was conducted.

Phenomenology is an appropriate method for investigating the essence of experiences as described by participants (Creswell, 2003; Glesne 2006).

## **Sample and Sampling**

The participants of this study consisted of 10 African American male elementary school teachers, grades pre-school through five, from metro Atlanta school districts. Creswell (2003) states five to 10 participants are adequate for phenomenological research. Participants were identified through purposeful sampling since the study is targeted toward a specific group of educators. When using a purposeful sampling approach, "The researcher actively selects the most productive sample to answer the research question," (Marshall, 1996, p. 523). In addition, purposeful sampling is appropriate for a qualitative study (Creswell, 2003). The total number of accessible African American elementary teachers is minuscule, which is not conducive to random sampling (Lewis, 2006).

The researcher identified and contacted potential participants using a snowball technique (Glesne, 2006). The researcher asked a principal to nominate a participant who met the selection criteria of being an African American male elementary teacher who has completed a traditional teacher preparation program. After conducting the first interview the researcher asked the interviewee to nominate another potential participant who met the selection criteria and so on until 10 participants were interviewed. Glesne (2006) has stated the snowball technique is an acceptable method for obtaining a sample in a qualitative study where the participants must meet a certain selection criteria. The participants, school districts, and elementary schools were given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

## **The Researcher**

Without doubt, I am emic to this research. I taught second grade for four years in a school with a faculty of 89, but only three males. This is not the exception, but the expectation when entering an elementary school. Searching to find the exact question that fills me with the passion that I must have it answered, I find that I am forced to reflect on how I became a second grade teacher. Both my parents were educators at the secondary level. My father taught mathematics until he went into finance with a major car dealership. Until her death when I was 11 years old, my mother taught tenth grade English and literature. I include these facts because the high esteem I attributed to teaching as a career was due, undoubtedly, to my parents—the two most influential people in my life.

Though I do hold educators in high esteem, I did contemplate other careers. My own hesitation about becoming an elementary teacher dealt with the low salary of teachers and possibly feeling out of place in an occupation comprised mostly of women. I am uncertain if my hesitations are mine only or shared among many African American male elementary teachers. Therefore, to be objective throughout my research I was conscious and cautious of my subjectivities, gender, race, and emic relation to the research that could skew my findings. I was conscious not to allow myself to project my feelings onto the participants' narratives during the interview or data analysis; rather I carefully explored and probed the narratives for a deep and true understanding.

## **Instrumentation**

The researcher gathered data for the study through individual interviews with each participant. These interviews took place in a natural environment of each

participant's choosing to remove barriers that may hinder open and detailed responses. Interviews are "used to obtain in-depth information about a participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations, and feelings about a topic, which assisted in the understanding of that person's perspective" (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p.144). Interviews were the most appropriate data collection method to answer the research question because they focus on the experiences of the participant in a real world context (Bean, 2006).

A standard interview protocol was developed (see Appendix B). The questions for this protocol were developed on the basis of a review of literature and were asked to each participant. Face validity for the interview was established through a pilot interview with a focus group of three participants who are African American male elementary teachers who will not be included in the actual research. In the same manner as the actual research sample, potential focus group participants were nominated by principals from the geographic area wherein the study was conducted. The results of the pilot study were used to revise the interview protocol.

Internal validity in qualitative research often coincides with the rigor of the analysis of the data (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). The interview protocol questions were aligned to the research questions to strengthen the validity of the instrument and the dependability of the data (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Table 3.1 depicts the relationship of interview questions to research questions. The researcher uses a consent form to obtain permission to use the participants' responses in the study. The consent form informed the participants of the nature of the study as well as the extent of their involvement.

Table 3.1

*Research Questions in Relation to Interview Questions*

Research Question	Interview Question
Over-arching: What common experiences do African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers?	All questions
Sub-question 1: Of these common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do these males identify as supportive?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9
Sub-question 2: How do African American males use these self-identified supportive experiences as guidance towards becoming an elementary teacher?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9
Sub-question 3: Of these common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do African American males identify as barriers?	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9
Sub-question 4: How do African American males overcome the self-identified barriers experiences?	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9

**Data Collection**

Once approval from the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board was obtained, the interviews were scheduled and conducted at a time and location convenient to the participant. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the researcher to probe further when greater explanation or clarification was needed. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-taped. Audio recording the interviews was not only allow for transcription, but also increased the credibility and dependability of the data (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Transcription was completed by a professional transcriptionist who signed a third-party confidentiality form. Upon

completion of verbatim transcription participants reviewed their narratives for accuracy; once transcripts were verified, audiotapes were destroyed. The transcripts will be kept for five years in a locked file to which only the researcher will have access. Each participant chose their own pseudonym which was also used to identify the audiotape of their interview. The document which linked the pseudonym associated with each participant's real name was kept in a secure location accessible only by the researcher to ensure confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis**

A preliminary coding list was developed from the literature and was refined as the data were analyzed. Using this coding list, transcripts were then analyzed using three levels of coding as recommended by Coffey and Atkinson (1996). The initial level was dedicated to finding recurring patterns in the participants' narratives. Next, these recurring patterns were coded into broader themes. Last, these themes were used to draw conclusions concerning the research and to answer the research question and its sub-questions. The findings of the study were reported by summarizing the narratives of the participants to answer the over-arching research question and its sub-questions. Additionally, direct quotes were included to strengthen the confirmability of the researcher's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Chapter Summary**

The researcher examined the experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers. The factors that affect this career choice both positively and negatively were identified and discussed. The participants consisted of only African American male elementary teachers purposefully selected because only their

experiences could answer the research questions. These teachers were confined to school districts in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia, which provided feasible access to the researcher. The data were collected via semi-structured interviews, audio-taped, and transcribed. The interviews were then analyzed using three levels of coding focusing on emerging patterns and broad themes. The findings were reported by summarizing the narrative of the participants to answer the over-arching questions and its sub-questions.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS**

**Introduction**

This investigation focused on the common experiences that African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers. The researcher examined the experiences of 10 African Americans male elementary teachers employed by school districts in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia, in order to identify the supportive experiences and the barriers they shared in common. Individual interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insight about their experiences en route to becoming an elementary teacher.

The researcher considered the following overarching question in this study: What common experiences do African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers? The following sub-questions were used to answer the overarching question:

Sub-question 1: Of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do these males identify as supportive?

Sub-question 2: How do African American males use these self-identified supportive experiences as guidance towards becoming an elementary teacher?

Sub-question 3: Of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do African American males identify as barriers?

Sub-question 4: How do African American males overcome the self-identified barriers?



Face validity for the interview protocol was established through a pilot interview with a focus group of three participants who are African American male elementary teachers. The responses from the pilot interview focus group are not included in the final data set. In the same manner as the actual research sample, the focus group of participants was nominated by principals from the geographic area wherein the study was conducted. The results of the pilot study were used to revise the interview protocol. The pilot interview focus group found question number two on the original interview protocol vague. Therefore, question number two was rewritten to be more specific.

All interviews were conducted during the month of February 2010. Each interview occurred in a location chosen by the participant. The majority of the interviews occurred in the participants' classroom after school. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. All questions were asked of each participant to ensure validity and reliability. Several probing questions were also asked when deeper understanding or clarification was needed.

### **Participant Profiles**

Each participant chose their own pseudonym to maintain confidentiality which is used throughout the report of the findings. The participant profile provides background information revealed during the interview. Table 4.1 depicts demographic information concerning the grade band (K-2 or 3-5) each participant teaches within and their age range. All participants are African American male elementary teachers. Eight of the 10 participants (80%) taught within the three through five grade band. As a music teacher, Robert, taught every grade kindergarten through five and therefore is identified as

teaching within both grade bands. Seven of the 10 participants (70%) were from 26 to 35 years old.

Table 4.1

*Demographics of Participants by Grade Band Taught and Age Range*

Participants	Grade Band Taught		Age Range			
	K-2	3-5	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45
Joseph		●		●		
Michael		●		●		
Robert	●	●	●			
King		●	●			
Blake		●			●	
Malcolm	●					●
Antwon		●	●			
Fred		●				●
J.P.		●	●			
Eric	●			●		
Total	3	8	4	3	1	2

**Joseph**

Joseph is 32 years old and teaches fifth grade in elementary school with a high population of English language learners. He has been a teacher for 10 years. Joseph grew up in New Orleans and was bussed into the city for school. The elementary school he attended was 50% African American and 50% Caucasian. The majority of Joseph’s elementary teachers were White; he had only one male teacher during his fifth grade year. Joseph however “remembers the impact” the “older white guy” had on his outlook of education. For Joseph there was “something different about a male teacher.” Joseph noticed that his male teacher was “very playful, very delightful, and very energetic.” These attributes made Joseph look forward to going to school. When Joseph thought about the female teachers he had prior to the male teacher he states, “The rigor was there

but not the enjoyment...I didn't have the excitement." It was not until high school that he was taught by an African American male.

Joseph's educational experiences influenced his future career choice. He stated, "What compelled me to become an elementary teacher was that I saw no one that necessarily looked like me." In his own classroom those experiences made him "decide to be the best teacher" he could be and "to have the biggest impact" on his students. He further stated, "I could offer something even more than what my teachers had offered."

### **Michael**

Michael in his mid-thirties and teaches fifth grade. He works in school where both the teachers and students are predominately Caucasian. Michael enjoyed his elementary school years in Wisconsin. He took pride in learning but also admits to "playing around." He was most fond of hands-on activities such as art and playing musical instruments. The most positive experience during these years occurred when Miss Turner took Michael "under her wing." She was the first teacher Michael remembers taking special interest in him, which he found "pretty cool." She entered him in spelling bees, summer enrichment, and invited him to her home to play with her son.

Michael first career aspiration was to become a medical technologist. However his career path changed when, "something in a dream said you're gonna major in education." Michael was the only African American male to graduate in 1998 from his university with a major in elementary education. Though he faced obstacles in obtaining his dream, he ensures his students it is possible. He stated, "I feel that all my students can and will achieve. I tell every single one of my students that, you can do it, you can go to school...Don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't succeed!"

## **Robert**

Robert is 26 years old and teaches music. He has taught for four years and only has worked in one school. Robert's elementary educational experience consisted of "nurturing" by "a lot of female teachers." Robert's elementary school was well-rounded where he felt there was balance between academic and social development. Robert considered his third grade teacher, an African American female named Ms. Polson, a "second mom." Robert recounted, "She would actually listen to you, talk to you like you were a person and not just a student...it was a relationship."

In high school Robert met a male band director who became his mentor. He exposed Robert to the possibilities of obtaining an education as well as becoming a teacher through music. This interaction further propelled Robert toward education. In his classroom Robert works to establish a rapport with his students that allows them to see him as a teacher and a role model. He stated, "I just give them respect as a person...and guide them to what they need to do as opposed to here's the information...I did my job."

## **King**

King is in his mid-twenties and teaches third grade. King "had a great elementary experience." Although his mother was a single parent, her being in the military allowed King to travel the world at a young age. He was educated in schools operated by the United States Department of Defense. King identified school with stability, especially when he missed his dad or extended family.

While in Germany, King came in contact with a third grade teacher named Ms. Welch. Ms. Welch made a personal connection with King as she shared her struggle with

breast cancer with the class. This was significant to King because his grandmother passed away due the same ailment that same year. King revealed, “She was such an open person and that’s one of my fondest memories of my early childhood.”

In his classroom, King strives for his students to take pride in their learning while also sharing with them who he is as a person. He stated, “I’m always gonna...spend time with my students. I’m not afraid to work after school or put in the extra work to make a difference.”

### **Blake**

In his mid-thirties, Blake is a special education teacher. He works with students that are diagnosed with emotional behavior disorder. Blake grew up in a small town in South Carolina where both of his parents worked as educators. His elementary school was predominately white and middle class. Though he realized early on he was different, he always felt accepted. Blake did not experience being taught by a male teacher until he was in the fifth grade. This teacher was also African American which was shocking to Blake. He stated, “I was used to having a white female teacher and so having a Black male it kinda reminded me of my father.” The lack of diversity in Blake’s elementary years allows him to “embrace the differences” of his students. Though many other teachers view Blake as patient, he stated, “I don’t see myself as patient, I just see that I have an understanding that...there are differences...and one approach doesn’t work for everyone.”

### **Malcolm**

Malcolm teaches second grade in a school that serves predominately African American students. Malcolm is a product of a family of educators. During his

elementary years Malcolm had two African American male teachers, Mr. Smith and Mr. Dansby. These two men stood out to Malcolm because they were “Black men in a predominately female career.” This later realization spurred Malcolm’s thoughts that African American men could be elementary teachers. However, Mr. Smith, Malcolm’s seventh grade teacher solidified the possibility. Mr. Smith always encouraged Malcolm to do his best and often stated, “Whatever you set your mind to you can achieve.”

In effort to rebel against his family of educators Malcolm worked one year as a probation officer before returning to school to become a teacher. While in school for the second time Malcolm also worked as paraprofessional in a second grade classroom. Malcolm stated, “Being a parapro, I learned firsthand not only textbook...I was able to put it into action.” Malcolm believes this experience made him more effective as a teacher because he had daily one-on-one contact with a teacher. He learned strategies that he later used in his own classroom.

### **Antwon**

Antown is 28 years old and teaches third grade. He is native of Georgia and currently teaches alongside teachers who taught him in elementary school. Antown only had Black female teachers but often wondered what it would be like to have a male teacher. He did not experience a male teacher until high school. His elementary experience was, “pretty good...it was okay.”

Ms. Pomby, Antown’s kindergarten teacher, is the teacher he connected with most during those years. He described her as, “Such a nurturer, such a nice, kind person.” Presently, Antwon and Ms. Pomby teach in the same school district. During his first year

teacher Ms.Pomby's and Antwon's paths crossed. He described the moment, "She was, like, blown away to see me teaching, like wow!"

In his own classroom, Malcolm feels the pressure of trying to improve the lives of his students through education. Malcolm is aware that several of his students share a background that is similar to his. He stated, "I dedicate a lot of my time to these kids...just coming from the neighborhoods they come from, I try to give them much more exposure...it's like my background where I grew up at."

### **Fred**

Fred is married with a daughter. He teaches fourth grade. During his elementary years he traveled with his parents who were in the military. Elementary school was "difficult." He "did not enjoy it," and "did not like it." Though not officially diagnosed, Fred believes he suffered from attention deficient hyper activity disorder. He also remembers being "overlooked" because teachers did not know how to "approach" him. During this time period Fred had only two African American teachers, both female. These two women provided Fred with his "first experience of somebody looking out" for him within the school system. Based on his experiences Fred tries to "reach out to all those kids that might escape your eye." He further stated, "I never feel like I've done the best job possible so I try to continuously improve."

### **J.P.**

In his late-twenties, J.P. teaches fourth grade. J.P.'s mother is high school math teacher. Although J.P. had an educator as a parent his elementary experiences were "negative...from racism to being put down all the way." J.P. grew up in rural southern Georgia and was taught by "mainly white female teachers." The most negative

experience occurred during his fifth grade year when a white female teacher told the class that J.P. had “the bad boy disease” and often put him in a closet. In his own classroom, J.P. allows “kids a chance to be themselves.” He wants his students grow while in his class because he “wasn’t able to grow” during his elementary years.

### **Eric**

Eric is in his early thirties and teaches first grade. Eric grew up in a single parent home and was raised by his mother. Eric had all female teachers in elementary school. He further stated, “And so the only men I saw in school were janitors.” He did not have a male teacher until ninth grade. This ninth grade teacher impacted Eric’s education by stressing its importance.

Eric entered teaching at the middle school level and later became an elementary teacher. He stated, “I graduated in the middle of the year so in January that job [middle school] was available to me.” When the opportunity presented itself Eric moved to the elementary level because “it’s very important for young boys and girls to get off to a good start.” Eric’s educational experiences “make him very passionate” and the work he does in his classroom. He wants his students to “have the skills that are necessary to be successful” once they leave his classroom.

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to identify common supportive experiences as well as common barriers faced by African American males en route to becoming elementary teachers. The identification of these supports and barriers led to suggested methods of recruitment. The participants’ responses were guided by the over-arching question: What



common experiences do African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers?

### **Themes and Supporting Attributes**

Table 4.2 depicts the frequency of each theme and their respective supporting attributes. The supporting attributes were identified during the first level of analysis, open-coding. The themes were derived inductively by finding commonalities among the supporting attributes.

Overall, the sources of support outnumbered the sources of barriers. The majority of the sources of support were tied to participants' knowledge of the need for African American male teachers and the potential to make an impact on a student's life early on. The majority of the sources of barriers stemmed from the educational experiences of the participants. These educational experiences were not isolated to their elementary years. The most recurring method of recruitment was to advertise the need of African American male teachers at the elementary level along with the potential for these teachers to impact a student's life in a positive manner.

Table 4.2

*Frequency Distribution of Major Themes and Supporting Attributes*

Themes	# of Occurrences	Supporting Attributes	Disaggregate Count of Occurrences
Sources of Support	149	Knowledge of Need/Potential to Impact	55
		Positive Educational Experience	43
		Intrinsic Traits	32
		Family	19
Sources of Barriers	97	Negative Educational Experience Prestige	56
		Feminization of Elementary Education	22
		Lack of Job Prestige	11
		Compensation	8
Methods of Recruitment	95	Advertisement of Need/Potential to Impact	36
		Early Exposure to Teaching	23
		Advertisement of Benefits	23
		Better Compensation	13

**Sources of Support**

The sources of support identified from interviews with each participant are knowledge of need/potential to impact students' lives, positive education experience, intrinsic traits, and family. These sources of support are presented in order from most frequently recurring to least. Each source of support is accentuated by direct quotes from interviews with the participants.

**Knowledge of need/potential to impact.** The knowledge of need and potential to make a positive impact on a student's life was the single greatest source of support participants cited for entering elementary education. Nine of the 10 participants (90%) mentioned the desire to impact the life of student or were aware of the limited number of positive black male role models to whom young children were exposed. These reasons were the greatest influencers for them entering elementary education even after some had taught upper grade levels. Robert realized his potential to impact the lives of students while student teaching in a high school.

The males in particular didn't have fathers in their lives...It was almost that they would kind of value what I would say...They would be attached to my words and they would follow me a little bit more than her [the female teacher].

After experiencing the connection he made with male high school students, Robert explained why he chose to teach at the elementary level.

Because I know a lot of mothers, they can steer them [male children] the right direction but they really can't relate...When I saw that, I said maybe if I go down to the elementary level...You can catch them and there's still a few values in them...They can carry that throughout...So once they reach high school, that doesn't have to be the first time they actually hear something from a man...that really cares about them.

Like Robert, Eric also experienced teaching at different level before becoming an elementary teacher. Working with middle school students increased Eric's awareness of the impact he could make at the elementary level.

It's very important for young boys and girls to get off to a good start. 'Cause sometimes by the time they get to middle school they're about three or four grade behind as far as reading...So it's very difficult for them to catch up...I recognized that and I said, well, I need to be on the elementary level...So I can help these kids learn how to read so by the time they get to middle school...They won't be as far behind.

King's statements also emphasized the impact of teaching at the elementary level versus any other level. He stated, "I knew that I could be able to make a difference. I felt like I could reach a child in elementary more so than I could reach a child in a middle school or a high school." Joseph realized early in his schooling that African American male teachers at all levels are a rarity. Joseph illustrated this phenomenon.

What compelled me to become an elementary teacher, the first thing is I saw no one that necessarily looked like me in school...I didn't really experience my first African American male teacher until high school...And I found the interaction [with a white male teacher] I had in the fifth grade...could have started earlier maybe first grade, second grade...And because I saw no one that looked like myself I thought I could offer something even more than what my teacher had offered.

A high school essay prompted Antwon to acknowledge a career in education as significant way to impact the lives of children. Antwon described the assignment.

I had to write an essay in high school on how can I make an impact on black history and I thought, okay what could I really do that could really help...that goes on and on and on...I said maybe teaching...because a lot of kids need help at early ages and a black male...a positive role model in their life.

Fred shared his desires, "To do good, change the world...I felt it [elementary education] was a place I could give back and I felt it was a strength of mine."

**Positive educational experience.** All participants (100%) of the study identified their educational experience as a source of support to pursue elementary education.

Joseph's elementary educational experiences were "quite positive" especially during his fifth grade year when he was taught by a male teacher for the first time.

There is something different about a male teacher...The impact...He was very playful, very delightful, very energetic. I remember everyday looking forward to going to school...Every lesson seemed to be very interactive and a little bit more engaging than my previous female teachers.

King, whose mother was in the military and therefore had to relocate often, found school as place of consistency and comfort.

Being away from my family and having to travel around the world. It was like, when I went to school, it was almost like a safe place for me. It was just somewhere I could go and just, you know, learn and not have to really worry about missing my dad or missing my relatives and family members...Teachers always seemed to loving and so nice...I didn't have a lot of worries so it was just a place that I could go and enjoy.

The remaining participants repeatedly described their educational experience as positive, good, fun, hands-on, or interactive. The participants also consistently described their female elementary teachers as nice, loving, caring, and nurturing. The participants who had male teachers in grades K-12 most often described them as different, stern, and firm, which they expressed are positive traits.

**Intrinsic traits.** Nine of the 10 participants (90%) often were unable to articulate a specific reason for their interest in becoming an elementary teacher. At these times the participants would realize an intrinsic trait also motivated their career choice. These intrinsic traits were innate feelings that elementary teaching was their destined profession. These intrinsic traits also provided the participants with the guidance needed to stay focused on the sources of support as well as overcome the sources of barriers. In the case of Michael, his decision to enter education was made subconsciously.

You might think I'm crazy, it came to me in a dream...Something in the dream said you're gonna major in education and, you know, it was really supposed to be special education, but I went to the education route and I just became an elementary ed. teacher.

Unlike Michael, when Antwon recalled his decision to become an elementary teacher he stated, "I was like okay I know it's something I want to do...I'm gonna come in and do what I can for the kids." Similar to Antwon, Robert emphasized, "I always had

a tendency to teach people. I like to teach people as well as learn...It's just in me." Fred was the only participant to explicitly identify his intrinsic motivations to teach, "I have that you know intrinsic thing."

**Family.** Eight of the 10 participants (80%) identified someone in their family as either supportive of them becoming an elementary teacher or having a job in the field of education. Although not as frequent as other sources of support, the family was definitely a strong influence. As an example, Blake described a pivotal point in his childhood.

I think my greatest influence has to be, or had to be my parents...I think I know when that happened...I think I got really sick and I went to school and I had to get out early...My mom took me to her school 'cause she had to finish some things up. So I was sitting in the corner of her classroom and I was like third grade and she was teaching fifth or sixth. And just to see the kids and how they interacted with her...It really made an impact and I still tell her to this day about that. So it really made an impact on my decision [to become a teacher].

Fred, whose father is currently a college professor, also shared his family's sentiments toward education as a profession. He emphasized, "I think my family encouraged it...It [education] was seen as an honorable profession...In our family, you should give back to the community." J.P and Robert also grew up in a family that had educators present. The fact that J.P.'s mother is a high school math teacher influenced his decision to enter education. Robert stated in simple terms what influenced his career choice, "The fact there's a lot of members of my family that are educators." King highlighted his mother's support of education.

My mom, you know, always valued education and made sure we did our homework and made sure we did our schoolwork. But, my mom was a single parent so she wasn't at the school involved or anything like that. I just remember her saying...I better not have to come up to the school for anything.

Though King and other participants did not come from a family of educators many were still able to identify family members as supports. This support most often was in the form of encouragement and interest in the participant's schooling.

### **Sources of Barriers**

The sources of barriers identified from interviews with each participant are negative educational experience, the feminization of elementary teaching, lack of job prestige, and wages. These sources of barriers are presented in order from most frequently recurring to least. Each barrier is emphasized by direct quotes from interviews with the participants.

**Negative educational experience.** All of the participants (100%) had an educational experience that was a source of a barrier when choosing to become an elementary teacher. These experiences were not isolated to their elementary years but encompassed all of their educational experience prior to becoming a teacher. These experiences could have prevented them from choosing to become elementary teachers.

J.P. described his worst experience in elementary school.

Most of my experiences were negative in elementary. From racism to being put down all the way because of who I am and how I look...[that I] came from south Georgia...The Black teachers would always uplift but, you know, in the 80s the White teachers, young white teachers right out of college were really racist, especially my fifth grade teacher I remember her...She told the kids I had a disease...I had the bad boy disease and she would put me in the corner, sometimes she would put me in the closet.

Fred also had negative experiences in elementary school. Fred found elementary school "difficult" and he "did not enjoy it." He also stated he felt "overlooked" and "off the radar" because his teachers did not know "how to approach him."

Though Michael was a junior in college and had already decided he wanted to be a teacher, he had to convince a college advisor as well. Michael recounted the event.

I came in and I wanted to sit down and I wanted to meet, you know, with the academic advisor in the School of Education because I was going to declare my major. And I sat down at her desk and she looked at me and she pulled out my grades, my transcript and she said, “Are you sure you want to be an elementary school teacher?” I’m like, “Yeah.” And she said, “It’s very rigorous. It’s a very strenuous program. Do you think you can handle it?” And I’m like “Yeah.” But I was deep down inside questioning myself, you know, when she was saying that stuff to me...I was honestly doubting myself, could I do this? Is it really that challenging? Is it really that difficult?...That made me think about what was going on. That made me really question was I heading in the right direction.

Like Michael, Antwon also experienced a college official who tried to persuade him not to pursue education as a major.

I missed a course, so I had to wait a whole ‘nother year out for that course...I had an extra year of undergrad because of an education course...I had a decision, like, should I drop this major and do something different? Matter of fact, the lady over the education department told me to, like go ahead, you sure you want to go ahead and do this? If I were you I might move on.

Eric’s most difficult obstacle to becoming a teacher occurred during his sophomore year.

He described the events that made him consider dropping out of school which would have alleviated his ability to be a teacher.

I don’t know it just seemed...I was having a lot of bad luck...Had a car stolen...I was held at gunpoint. I went to a historically black college...I mean if I had to do it all over again I would make the same choice...But most historically Black colleges are in low income areas where there is a high crime rate. And so my school was no different. That’s the area that it’s in and so just a lot of students were targets...I just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time...And I was thinking about dropping out.

Though King did not have any personal educational experiences that he identified as a barrier, he shared that other African American male education majors he knew did. King revealed, “A lot of people struggle with passing the standardized tests...not doing what it took to pass the classes or to, you know, get certified.”



**Feminization of elementary education.** All participants (100%) reported the feminization of education as a barrier to them choosing to become an elementary teacher.

Robert was the only participant to share his feelings that being male in an elementary setting is viewed as deviant or dangerous to a child. Robert stated,

Most guys who are in education, they just really love the kids...They want to see grow and they want to see them flourish...This fear of you know, I don't want to be alone with this student...I gotta make sure there are three other people that are here just so they can be a witness. If we can get that out of the way that would be a relief.

Most often the participants revealed this barrier by emphasizing the majority of their teachers were female. Malcolm, when commenting on the black male teachers he was taught by, stated, "What stood out to me was they were black men in a predominantly female, you know, career." Eric and J.P. only had female teachers "mainly white females." Eric further added, "The only men I saw in the school were janitors." Blake admitted that initially he was not looking for a teaching position in an elementary school.

When I was looking for a job in education, I actually didn't look, I wasn't looking for elementary...It was because I was used to it being more of a female oriented career or setting so I was looking at middle school and high school.

Michael's father was not a supporter of his career choice. Michael shared, "My dad was like, Why do you want to become a teacher? Women are teachers."

**Lack of job prestige.** Three of the 10 participants (30%) noted job prestige as a barrier to them becoming an elementary teacher. Joseph's peers in college made him aware that teaching was not as prestigious as becoming a doctor or pharmacist.

My undergraduate is from Yellow University [pseudonym], which is known for putting African Americans into medical school, so for me to attend Yellow and be an education major was very odd because of what they're known for...You would get that puzzled look...If I was the kind of person to be influenced by peer

pressure I would have changed my major...Those [doctor and pharmacist] are more prestigious positions than you're simply a teacher.

When discussing teaching in relation to other careers Fred created a metaphor for his view of being a male teacher and its lack of prestige.

I think people expect Black males to be in teaching but for so long and then become administrators...I think that...teachers have to be seen as maybe an ending profession...and making leadership something different...Like a doctor becomes a doctor but they don't have to become a hospital administrator...They focus on being the best doctor they can.

Michael also believes that males view teaching as less honorable than other occupations. He stated, "Most men want to enter engineering or communications," instead of being a teacher.

**Compensation.** Five of the 10 participants (50%) reported compensation as a barrier in their interview, although it was the least reported. Fred has a daughter and was the only participant who was married. He described his experience with having a family on a teacher's salary.

It's difficult to raise a family on a teacher's salary. As matter of fact, my wife makes more than me and I think we probably couldn't have done half the things...When I have the reality of how much I have to pay for this, this, and this. To have the house...To have a car...That's almost impossible without someone else. You're definitely gonna have to have a double income family.

When considering becoming a teacher, Blake and Michael pondered the stereotypes of teachers one of which was "low income." Joseph also stated, "The money, you know, it's not enough money."

### **Methods of Recruitment**

Although the purpose of this research did not include identifying methods of recruitment, the participants were eager to share their suggestions. The researcher chose to include their suggestions to honor the participants' narratives. Also the suggestions are

beneficial to future recruitment efforts aimed toward African American males. The methods of recruitment identified from interviews with each participant are advertisement of need/potential to impact, early field experiences for teacher education candidates, advertisement of benefits, and better compensation. These methods of recruitment are presented in order from most frequently recurring to least. Each method of recruitment is highlighted by direct quotes from interviews with the participants.

**Advertisement of need/potential to impact students' lives.** Nine of the 10 participants (90%) discussed making African American males aware of their need as teachers at the elementary level and the potential to impact a student's life. It was the most frequently occurring method of recruitment.

Although Blake is an African American male who has completed several years of schooling, he was not aware of the need for African American male teachers at the elementary level or the potential to impact a student's life. This changed when Blake spoke to the principal of an elementary school. Blake shared his moment of realization.

Somehow the principal of the elementary school got my resume...and called me...so I kind of put it on the back burner and then I finally decided I'll come and see what it is...In talking to her I realized that, you know, that I can probably make more of an impact in the elementary school as a black male than I could in, you know, high school and I was drawn to that.

The advertisement of need and potential to impact students' lives often was also related to making African American males aware that they are needed elementary students to be positive role model. Michael stated, "You're needed because you have younger children who also don't have that father figure." Eric reiterated,

I still don't think there's enough positive images for young kids to look at as far black men...The images...we see on television are athletes or entertainers...In our community young boys growing up there want to be entertainers or athletes...That's what they end up going after...That's real limited you know.

J. P. believes there is some advertisement of need occurring but not as wide-spread as necessary. As J. P. claimed,

They [education leaders] need to tell people about the need for black males. I think they are afraid of saying we need black men. We'll say it in the church or we'll say it in our black meetings, but we won't say it outside that scene...So if they'd just be truthful.

King would encourage other African American males "to see the positive impact and power you have in these classrooms and schools." King further emphasized his point when he said, "It's a powerful feeling to be able to have that kind of impact or have kids who respect you like that and want to do the right thing." Like King, Joseph realizes the power of impacting students' lives but believes other black males need to be "put in situations where they can actually see the impact they're bringing to a student."

**Early exposure to teaching.** Nine of the 10 participants (90%) reported early exposure to teaching as method to recruit more African American males to elementary teaching. The methods of exposure ranged from African American male elementary teachers visiting middle and high schools to colleges requiring education majors to do a practicum in each level of school and to complete more field observations. Joseph reflected on his own practicum experience.

We started the very first semester...You started doing observations. Most teacher programs, teacher education programs do not start providing field experiences until student are juniors. Yellow [pseudonym for the university] starts your very first semester as a freshman...before you're accepted into the teacher education program you have maybe 90-100 hours of field experiences and you have an idea whether or not this what you want to do...And I think affording students those opportunities especially black males might elicit more responses to them becoming teachers.

Similar to the military, Eric suggested that African American male elementary teachers recruit other African American males in high school.

If we can go in high schools and speak as a group of African American male teachers going into the high school, talking to these kids, just like the army or navy....So if we, as a group, went in I think that would...have an impact.

Robert, Michael, J.P, Malcolm, and Blake all stated that being exposed to an elementary classroom early in their life made them more interested in teaching at the elementary level. This exposure occurred via a family member who worked in education, working as substitute teacher, or working as a paraprofessional at the elementary level.

**Advertisement of benefits.** Seven of the 10 participants (70%) reported the benefits of education as a means to recruit more African American males into elementary teaching. The most frequently occurring benefit was the 190 day work year. Robert stated, "If you have a family you can spend a lot of time with your family 'cause once they're in school, you're in school...and they're out you're out." Also when Michael decided to become an elementary teacher he thought, "Hey, I get my summers off and I get my weekends off." King further emphasized the attractiveness of the work calendar along with other benefits, "You're able to stay young, you work 190 days of the year. You work in an air-conditioned building. It's very...it's almost luxurious when you think about it." In addition to the work year and amenities King also stated, "And I think I heard somewhere that they [the government] would pay off your student loans."

Joseph shared a different benefit that is specific to elementary teaching. Joseph stated,

I also enjoy teaching all subjects, which is a benefit of working on the elementary level. I am not, you know, bound to just teaching language arts or just math or just science or social studies. So I am allowed to be very hands on and it gives me that first impact.

Joseph believes teaching a single subject for an entire school day, which is often done middle and high schools, is repetitive and uninspiring.

**Better compensation.** Seven of the 10 participants (70%) alluded to improving compensation to recruit African American males to elementary education at least once.

King believes most people are motivated by money. King stated:

I would suggest increasing the pay...Society in America not, the times, where we're at...It has to be something that someone can take care of a family or take care of themselves without having to worry about, you know, financial things...Show them these people who are able to come in and make a successful living...Young people, money motivate them.

Malcolm suggested making education similar to business by offering a "signing bonus."

The remaining participants alluded to the potential recruitment method of increasing wages by acknowledging many African American males do not consider teaching because of the wages. Fred stated, "The money is not all that great...It [teaching] does have to have more money to live so that people can maintain families."

While Blake was positive about his salary, he also provided ways to supplement a teacher's income. Blake responded, "The income, I mean, I'm comfortable and, you know, there are other routes that you can do...You know after school and summer school." Robert also reiterated, "They pay isn't too bad."

### **Chapter Summary**

The researcher conducted 10 one-on-one interviews with African American male elementary teachers from school districts located within the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight concerning the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers. The interviews were audio taped and then transcribed. These transcripts were coded to identify reoccurring patterns and broader themes.

The researcher identified sources of support, sources of barriers, and methods of recruitment. In order of greatest frequency of occurrence to least the sources of support included: (1) knowledge of need/potential to impact, (2) positive educational experience, (3) intrinsic traits, and (4) family. In order of greatest frequency of occurrence to least the sources of barriers included: (1) negative educational experience, (2) feminization of elementary education, (3) job prestige, and (4) compensation. In order of greatest frequency of occurrence to least the methods of recruitment included: (1) advertisement of need/potential to impact, (2) early exposure to teaching (tied), (2) advertisement of benefits (tied), and (3) better compensation.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the entire study. It includes a discussion of the research findings, conclusions, and implications. It also includes recommendations for future research concerning the topic of African American male elementary teachers.

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to identify common supportive experiences as well as common barriers faced by African American males en route to becoming elementary teachers. The researcher considered the following overarching question in this study: What common experiences do African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers? The following sub-questions were used to answer the overarching question:

Sub-question 1: Of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do these males identify as supportive?

Sub-question 2: How do African American males use these self-identified supportive experiences as guidance towards becoming an elementary teacher?

Sub-question 3: Of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do African American males identify as barriers?

Sub-question 4: How do African American males overcome the self-identified barriers?



The researcher examined the experiences of 10 African Americans male elementary teachers employed by school districts in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, Georgia. Individual interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insight about their experiences en route to becoming an elementary teacher. All interviews were conducted during the month of February 2010. Each interview occurred in a location chosen by the participant. The majority of the interviews occurred in the participants' classrooms after school. Confidentiality was maintained by allowing each participant to choose his own pseudonym. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. All questions were asked of each participant to ensure validity and reliability. Several probing questions were also asked when deeper understanding or clarification was needed. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed. The researcher coded the supporting attributes during the first level of analysis, open-coding. The themes were derived inductively by finding commonalities among the supporting attributes.

### **Analysis of Research Findings**

The researcher identified sources of support, sources of barriers, and methods of recruitment related to the experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers. In order of greatest frequency of occurrence to least the sources of support included: (1) knowledge of need/potential to impact, (2) educational experience, (3) intrinsic traits, and (4) family. In order of greatest frequency of occurrence to least the sources of barriers included: (1) educational experience, (2) feminization of elementary education, (3) job prestige, and (4) compensation. In order of greatest frequency of occurrence to least the methods of recruitment included: (1) advertisement

of need/potential to impact, (2) early exposure to teaching (tied), (2) advertisement of benefits (tied), and (3) better compensation.

### **Discussion of Research Findings**

The researcher was able to identify sources of support, sources of barriers, and methods of recruitment from interviews with each participant. These findings allowed the researcher to answer the overarching research question: What common experiences do African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers? The discussion of the findings is guided by the review of literature and the research sub-questions which support the over-arching question. The discussion will be presented in the following order: sources of support (research question 1), sources of barriers (research question 3), guidance towards becoming an elementary teacher as well as overcoming barriers (research questions 2 and 4), and methods of recruitment.

#### **Research Question 1**

The focus of research question one was supportive experiences. It asked, of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do these males identify as supportive? Participants' responses during the semi-structured interview were used to identify recurring patterns as sources of support. These patterns were reflected in four common themes: (1) knowledge of need/potential to impact, (2) positive educational experience, (3) intrinsic traits, and (4) family.

Milloy (2003) found that most teachers, including those who are African American, do not enter teaching for monetary gain. Milloy further found the fact teachers were aware their impact on a student life goes beyond the year they spend with each student supported their career choice. In agreement with Milloy, Brown and Butty

(1999) also found in their study of African American male teachers that one of the most significant factors that supported their career choice was the desire to impart knowledge to affect the life of a student. In this study, nine of the 10 African American male elementary teachers also indicated that impacting the life of students was a major factor for them pursuing a career in education. These participants further stated that elementary education was attractive because it allowed them to influence students early in their lives. However, the desire to impact lives of students is not unique to African American males.

Brown (2002) stated that many African American educators know their presence is needed in education, but often feel added pressures unrelated to teaching. Brown (2002) found this added pressure was a result of the African American educator feeling the need to serve dual roles as teacher and role model. Some even considered themselves surrogate mothers or fathers for African American children who have unstable home lives (Brown, 2002). The participants in this study also acknowledged the duality of being an African American male elementary teacher and role model. However, the participants in this study did not express any feelings of pressure or negativity in relation to having a dual role. In this study, the participants were drawn to elementary education in hopes of being a role model and therefore viewed it as a benefit of the position.

All participants of this study revealed their positive educational experience supported their decision to become elementary teachers. These experiences were articulated through anecdotes about relationships with elementary teachers and/or by recounting learning activities they enjoyed. Overall, the participants described their elementary experiences as positive, fun, good, hands-on, and/or interactive.

Gordon (2000) found some parents of African Americans did not support their children entering the teaching profession because the increased number of more lucrative career options available to African Americans. Unlike Gordon, eight of the 10 participants in this study identified someone in their family as either supportive of them becoming an elementary teacher or having a job in the field of education. This high percentage of participants with a family supportive of a career in education highlights the influence of family on the career aspirations of the participants.

### **Research Question 3**

The focus of research question three was barrier experiences. It asked, of the common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers, which do African American males identify as barriers? Participants' responses during the semi-structured interview were used to identify recurring patterns as sources of support. These patterns were reflected in four common themes: (1) negative educational experience, (2) the feminization of elementary teaching (3) lack of job prestige, and (4) compensation.

In this study, all of the participants had an educational experience that was negative and could have hindered them from becoming an elementary teacher. The majority of these experiences manifested themselves in the realization that the participant was not taught by a male or an African American male teacher at all or until the latter portion of their education. The participants stated that they were not afforded an opportunity to make a same gender connection in conjunction with their educational experience. The lack of male and African American male teachers noted by this study's participants supports the work of several researchers. Foster and Newman (2005),

Skelton (2003), and Sumsion (2000) documented the scarcity of male elementary teachers. In addition, the under-representation of African American teachers is also well documented (e.g., Jackson, 2001; Lewis, 2006; Milloy, 2003).

In relation to secondary educational experience, researchers have found low minority participation in teaching due to lack of financial assistance to attend college and difficulty passing certification exams (Gordon, 2000; Jacullo-Noto, 1991; King, 1993; Milloy, 2003; Okezie, 2003). None of the participants in this study cited these as personal barriers during their educational experience. However, one participant did acknowledge that he knew other African American males pursuing a degree in education that did have difficulty passing certification exams. College officials tried to persuade two participants in this study not pursue education as major.

In the three studies of Foster and Newman (2005), Skelton (2003), and Sumsion (2000), participants expressed concerns about working in a field traditionally thought to be meant for women. Moreover participants in these studies voiced their perceptions that female colleagues and parents might assume that male teachers who were caring were possibly either pedophiles or homosexuals; both being viewed as dangerous to children (Foster & Newman, 2005; Skelton, 2003; Sumsion, 2000). Only one participant in this study revealed his concerns about being viewed deviant or a danger to a child. This was manifested by the participant stating he preferred not to be alone with a student or to always have a witness of his interactions with a student. The sentiments of this participant are supported by Mills, Martinio, and Lingard (2004). Mill et al. argued that males will only enter education when many social constructs regarding the contradiction of being a teacher and masculine have been demolished. In this study, the majority of

participants repeated the fact that most teachers are female. This forced the participants to decide if they were willing to join a career where they would be a distinct minority.

Shipp (1999) found job prestige was an unimportant factor when choosing a career in education. Similarly, in this study three of the ten participants noted job prestige as barrier to them becoming an elementary teacher. These three participants stated society and most men believe occupations such as being a doctor, engineer, or educational administrator are more prestigious than being an elementary teacher.

DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) also acknowledged that teaching is considered low status by both racial and gender minorities.

In this study, wages were the least reported barrier to entering elementary education. Several participants acknowledged the stereotype that teaching is a low income field, but stated once entering the field of education they lived comfortably. Gordon (2000) and Shipp (1999) both presented similar information. They found that salary is not an important factor in the decision to become a teacher. The low wage rumor seemingly has been fueled overtime by outside influences and has become a common societal belief.

#### **Research Questions 2 and 4**

Research questions two and four sought to understand how African American males en route to becoming elementary teachers were able to maintain their course. Research question two asked, how do African American males use these self-identified supportive experiences as guidance towards becoming an elementary teacher? Research question four asked, how do African American males overcome the self-identified barriers? Sumsion (2000) found that male elementary teachers may overcome the barrier

of choosing to work in a highly feminized occupation by learning when to accentuate or deemphasize their masculinity. None of the participants in this study stated they engaged or disengaged their masculinity to cope with working in a female dominated occupation.

In this study, the frequency of supportive experiences (149) outnumbered the frequency of barriers (97) by approximately 150%. This suggests that for this sample, the barriers African American males face en route to becoming elementary teachers are not as numerous as the supportive experiences. Two of the participants in this study also revealed that an early barrier eventually motivated them to pursue a career in elementary education. Specifically, in both cases this barrier was a negative educational experience. These two participants became elementary teachers to prevent other students from having similar negative experiences.

Nine of the 10 participants identified intrinsic traits or motivation for their career aspirations. The participants' intrinsic trait of feeling their personality fit elementary education as evidenced by statements such as "It [the desire to teach elementary school] is just in me," kept the participants on their career path. These intrinsic traits were not influenced by external experiences because the participants held the belief they were meant to be elementary teachers. Therefore, they were able to continuously overcome barriers and use the supportive experiences as guidance and validation that they were making the correct career choice. The lower frequency of barrier occurrence coupled with the intrinsic traits of the participant allowed the African males to overcome the barriers and use the supportive experiences as guidance towards becoming an elementary teacher.

## **Methods of Recruitment**

The need for males to enter teaching especially at the elementary level has been noted by researchers as early as 1953 (Rogers, 1953). Participants' responses during the semi-structured interview were used to identify recurring patterns as methods of recruitment. These patterns were reflected in four common themes: (1) advertisement of need/potential to impact, (2) early exposure to teaching, (3) advertisement of benefits, and (4) better compensation.

Brown and Butty (1999) suggested the opportunity to impart knowledge be incorporated into the recruitment of African American male teachers. Nine of the 10 participants agreed that advertising the need of African American male elementary teachers and the potential impact they could have on a student's life should be incorporated into recruitment efforts. This was the most frequently recurring method of recruitment in this study.

Weist (2003) and Golias (1990) suggested career days and prospective trips to colleges of education for male students could increase the number of male students. They stated these trips could start as early as middle school. In this study, nine of the 10 participants reported early exposure to teaching as method of recruitment. One participant specifically suggested African American male elementary teachers visit high school to recruit similar to the military.

Gordon (2000) reported that teachers valued the benefits of teaching such as the work hours and high level of job security. Seven of the 10 participants in this study stated advertising the benefits of teaching could attract more African American male elementary teacher. The most frequently recurring benefit was the 190-day work year. In addition,



one participant shared that the ability to teach multiple subjects is an attractive benefit often only available to elementary teachers.

When Gordon (2000) interviewed in-service African American teachers, the most common response to explain why more African Americans do not enter teaching was because of low wages. Similarly, seven of the 10 participants in this study recommended better compensation to recruit African American males to elementary teaching. The participants in this study felt their wages were comfortable but also believed even higher wages would attract more African American males to elementary education.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study reveal sources of support and sources of barriers faced by 10 African American males en route to becoming elementary teachers. The researcher found that the sources of support (1) knowledge of need/potential to impact students' lives, (2) educational experience, (3) intrinsic traits, and (4) family did not greatly differ from the supportive experiences of any person choosing to enter education regardless of gender or ethnicity. However, the researcher found one of the sources of barriers, the feminization of elementary education, could only be experienced by males. Additionally, the researcher found no barriers that were specifically experienced because the participants were African American. Therefore, when these 10 African American males considered becoming an elementary teacher being male was more significant than being African American.

The feminization of teaching is a phenomenon that has not diminished. However, the supportive experiences of the African American males in this study who chose to become elementary teachers were greater than the feminization of teaching barrier.

Considering the continuing decline of African Americans' and other minorities' participation in education as a career, the increase in support is most likely due to the awareness of the need for African American male teachers at the elementary level.

Therefore, if the supportive experiences of the participants outnumbered the barriers because of the knowledge of the need/potential to impact students' lives then the most frequently recurring method of recruitment aligns directly with supportive experiences. The most frequently recurring reason for the participants becoming elementary teachers was because of the need for African American male elementary teachers and their potential to impact a student's life. Similarly, the most frequently recurring avenue of recruitment was to advertise the need for African American male elementary teachers and their potential to significantly impact the life of a student. In this study, one participant clearly articulated that once he was made aware of the need and potential to impact the life of a student he decided to become an elementary teacher. Making more African American males aware of the fact they are desperately needed as elementary teachers could increase the number who chose to enter elementary education.

### **Implications**

This study has implications to educator recruitment practices and African American males who are considering becoming elementary teachers. Additionally, an increase in the number of African American male elementary teachers could improve the academic achievement of African American male students. The findings provide in-sight concerning common experiences African American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers. Awareness of these experiences will inform recruitment efforts and practices of colleges of education, teacher preparation programs, and human resources

departments within school districts. These entities can use the findings to streamline or differentiate their recruiting practices aimed toward African American males.

The findings are valuable African American males who are considering becoming elementary teachers because they may realize their experience is not isolated to themselves. This realization then becomes another supporting experience that guides them toward elementary education. It also provides evidence to these individuals that though barriers exist they are not insurmountable.

Currently, African American males underperform academically and drop-out of high school at a greater rate than any other minority group. Research has shown that students who have a teacher of the same race and gender perform better academically. Parents and students have also reported the benefits of having a same-gendered teacher. Thus increasing the participation of African American males in elementary education could positively affect the achievement and social development of African American male students.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In this study, it was found that being male was more of a barriers than being African American. The researcher suggests exploring the barriers Caucasian and Hispanic males face en route to becoming elementary teachers. This information can then be used to compare and contrast the barriers of African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic males. Once identified recruitment practices of male teachers can be modified.

Additional research concerning the experiences of African American males en route to becoming elementary teachers is also recommended. In this study all of the participants were in-service teachers. A study of African American male participants in

college pursuing a degree in early childhood education would be beneficial to determine if there is a difference between the perceptions of their experiences and those in-service teachers who participated in this study.

Another recommendation for future research concerns the recruitment practices aimed towards African American males by school districts. Since students perform better academically when they are taught by a teacher who resembles themselves, it is imperative that school district effectively try to provide this opportunity to all students. Measuring the effectiveness of recruitment practices would inform districts of which practices are appropriate and those that need to be restructured.

### **Dissemination**

This dissertation will be made available electronically via the Internet. The researcher will also publish articles in journals to further communicate the findings of the research. Additionally, the researcher will make presentations at conferences and other educational research events. Any other scholarly medium by which to disseminate the findings of this research is also welcome by the researcher.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The overall goals of the researcher were to identify sources of support and barriers in order to improve recruitment of African American male elementary teachers and to give a voice to a group of educators who are often invisible due to their paucity. Many young students are only exposed to African American males via mass media outlets. Often these African American males are athletes or entertainers. The researcher would like elementary students to experience an African American male role model that is accessible and represents education as a means to success. The researcher has learned

that though a group of educators may be the same race and gender their experiences can be vastly different. The researcher believes those in the business of teaching should also continue to be in the business of learning. It is important to realize differences in education are to be celebrated rather than ignored.

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APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT



DEPARTMENT OF Leadership, Technology, and Human Development  
COLLEGE OF Graduate Studies

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM:**

#### **A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences African American Males have En Route to Becoming Elementary Teachers**

Dear Participant:

My name is Cleveland Johnson, III and I am a student in the doctoral program at Georgia Southern University. As part of my degree requirements I am conducting a study into the experiences that African American male elementary teachers have en route to becoming elementary teachers. Accordingly, I am inviting you to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, I am providing you with statements that explain your rights as a participant.

1. The purpose of this research is to examine the common experiences African-American males have en route to becoming elementary teachers
2. Participation in this research will include completion of one 45-60 minute interview that will be audio-taped.
3. Discomforts and Risks: The risk associated with this research is no greater than risk associated with daily life experiences.
4. Benefits:
  - a. The benefits to participants include gaining a better self-perception while working in a highly feminized occupation and gaining a larger platform to share their personal experience.
  - b. The benefits to society include informing better recruitment practices of African-American male elementary teachers. If more African-American male elementary teachers are recruited as a result of the implementation of findings from this study, student achievement of African-American males and other male students of color may increase.
5. Duration/Time required from the participant: 45-60 minutes
6. Statement of Confidentiality: All information is confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Anonymity is assured your name will not appear in any written reports that stem from data collected from the researcher. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym which will be also be used to identify the audiotape of their interview. The pseudonym associated with each participant will be kept in a secure location accessible only by the researcher to ensure confidentiality. The pseudonyms and transcripts of each interview will be kept in a separate secure location from the identifying list. All data will be destroyed on May 10, 2013.

7. Right to Ask Questions: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843.
8. Compensation: There is no compensation for your participation.
9. Voluntary Participation: You do not have to participate in this research; and may end your participation at any time by telling the researcher you do not wish to continue. Also you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
10. Penalty: There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study; you may decide at any time not to participate further and may withdraw without penalty or retribution.
11. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences Black Males have en route to Becoming Elementary Teachers

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\_\_\_\_\_  
 Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Investigator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Interview Protocol

### **Introductory Protocol**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. To facilitate transcription and analysis of the interview, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. For your information, only I and my dissertation committee will be privy to the tapes and transcripts. The audiotapes will be destroyed as soon as you have verified the transcripts accurately reflect your statements.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. Before we start I would like to remind you that your participation is totally voluntary, you may choose not to respond to any particular question(s), to end the interview, and/or withdraw at any time.

Do you understand?

Would you like to continue? If so, please sign the Informed Consent Form.

### **Introduction**

My research project as a whole focuses on the common experiences black males have en route to be coming elementary teachers. I am trying to learn more about why there are so few black male elementary teachers and which factors promote or deter them from entering elementary education. You were asked to participate in this interview because your experiences will help inform my research and educational leaders, on ways to recruit and retain more black males into elementary education.

Let's begin.

1. Tell me about your experiences when you were in elementary school.
2. Share with me any significant positive or negative experiences you had with an elementary teacher(s).
3. What compelled you to become an elementary school teacher?
4. What role did being male play in your career choice?
5. What role did being African-American play in your career choice?
6. What was the greatest influence or reason for you choosing to be an elementary teacher?
7. What was most difficult obstacle or experience that could have prevented you from becoming an elementary teacher?



8. What influence did these experiences have on you as a teacher?

9. Is there anything else about your experiences in relation to this topic that I have not asked that you would like to have?

\*Depending on the response of the participant, probing questions may be necessary to fully understand and interpret the participant's experiences.

APPENDIX C  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University  
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

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**To:** Cleveland Johnson III  
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**CC:** Charles E. Patterson  
Associate Vice President for Research

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** February 10, 2010

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H10199** and titled "A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences African American Males Have En Route to Becoming Elementary Teachers", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to **10** subjects.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes  
Compliance Officer