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African-American Male Teachers: Examining the Insight, Encounters, and Best Teaching Practices

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African-American Male Teachers: Examining the Insight,
Encounters, and Best Teaching Practices

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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Brandon Morgan under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Brandon Morgan

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April 17th, 2019

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Date

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Abstract

African-American Male Teachers: Examining the Insight, Encounters, and Best Teaching Practices. Brandon Morgan, 2019: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: black, male, teacher, education

The experiences students have in schools has a large effect not only on their career choices but also on the way they interact with other members of society in the future. Specifically, the K-12 education system has an objective of ensuring that all students are adequately prepared to become responsible and productive members of society. Unfortunately, research shows that African-American male students and teachers face comparatively high levels of societal challenges compared to their Caucasian counterparts. General demographic trends reveal a serious concern.

While the number of black students entering the education system is increasing, there is a reduction in the number of African-American male teachers. Extant research shows that African-Americans are the least-represented ethnic group in the education system. African-Americans male teachers make up a mere 2% of the teacher population in public schools. Some of the challenges these teachers face include, but are not limited to, racism, lack of mentors, and lack of professional support from school administrations.

Using inputs and frameworks derived from the Critical Race Theory, this paper analyzes the experiences of black male teachers in the K-12 program and their perceived contribution to the education system. The study participants were all selected from their existing communities. Five African-American male teachers were interviewed.

The data collection design made use of an open-ended interview where interviewees were given a chance to express their opinions and explain their experiences. The findings of this research revealed an obvious bias in the treatment of African-American male teachers. In particular, the research finds a shortage of mentors and role models for black students. There is also evidence of lackluster institutional support for African-American male teachers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

When Barack Obama was elected the President of the United States of America in 2008, a national discussion was initiated concerning how his visibility could help inspire the young African-American population to achieve their dreams, with the President serving as a role model (Brown, 2012). This discussion has also helped attract more attention to the problem of underrepresentation of African-American men in the teaching profession, and lead to Arne Duncan, then Education Secretary, designing and initiating a national campaign to include and recruit more African-American male teachers within the public school system (Brown, 2012).

While K-12 school districts make an increasing effort to meet the various needs of their students, certain minority groups of students continue to fall behind in terms of academic performance. According to the results of the 2015 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), one specific minority group, African-American students, were ranked as lowest in terms of their knowledge of mathematics and reading proficiency. Moreover, these students obtained basic scores in both subjects, thus demonstrating the importance of finding solutions to the identified problem (Walley, 2018). It has been pointed out that in the U.S. public education system there is an ongoing process of student population diversification. As of 2014, the minority population learners have become an overall majority in the public K-12 school system, as over 50% of the students identify as Hispanic, Asian, or African-American. Yet, students belonging to the African-American group have been reported to experience some of the most serious issues during the process of learning (Ellis & Hartlep, 2017; Walley, 2018).

Therefore, with the increased pressure on state accountability for child learning, as well as the increasing number of African-American learners in the K-12 classrooms, public school districts must work hard to find viable solutions to these issues (Walley, 2018). Although the U.S. school districts claim to embrace diversity and increase their commitment to meeting the needs of minority populations, according to the recent data provided by the United States Department of Education, the majority of the U.S. teaching workforce (82%) are Caucasian while only a minor proportion (7%) are African-American (Walley, 2018). Therefore, the problem in focus has not been adequately tackled or addressed on the school district level.

As phrased by West (2008), the problem of African-American males deserves immediate attention as these youths are "… living in areas of concentrated ghetto poverty, still shadowed by the legacy of slavery and second-class citizenship, too many young black men are trapped in a horrific cycle that includes active discrimination, unemployment, poverty, crime, prison, and early death" (p. 11). Ensuring more adequate and fair representation of ethnically diverse teachers within the public school workforce can be one step towards improving academic outcomes of black youth, and minority youth in general (Brown, 2012). African-American male teachers have been discussed as one key underrepresented group whose professional and personal experiences we know very little about (Agee, 2004). Limited knowledge of African-American male teachers' experiences and identities further limits opportunities to increase their representation within the U.S. public school context.

The research was based on the some of the key concepts and terms defined in a later section.

The Research Problem

As discussed by Agee (2004) immediate attention is required to improve African-American student performance and male teacher representation. Moreover, according to the argument developed by Walley (2018), in America, black teachers have long experienced various issues regarding workplace acceptance. Despite improvements in reducing gender and racial stereotyping in education, in particular the K-12 system, the issue remains critical. For a long time, voices of black teachers and other African-Americans have been ignored, as they were regarded as pariahs, marginalized within society. It is therefore important to explore their voices now and include their experiences in the process of developing policies and interventions aimed at improving the overall level of K-12 education offered in the United States of America.

Walley (2018) stressed that it is important to explore unique individual experiences of African-American male teachers to fully understand and analyze the complex social environment, challenges, and institutional barriers they experience daily. Finally, an analysis of the existing empirical evidence (Jupp et al., 2016; Walley, 2018) suggests that, although attempts have been made to understand experiences and problems facing African-American teachers within the educational system in the U.S. (Agee, 2004; Walley, 2018), little has been done to evaluate and estimate their contribution within the context of the K-12 system in particular. Therefore, there is a strong need to explore identities and experiences of African-American teachers in the U.S. public school system, thereby helping policy makers and other relevant stakeholders develop effective measures to further increase their participation and engagement, thus improving academic outcomes for African-American students and other groups of learners in the K-12 school

system.

Background and Justification

According to Thomas and Warren (2017), African-American males deciding to teach in the U.S. public school system usually receive a warm welcome. However, the very environment and conditions they enter can often be characterized as precarious and troubling (Harrison, Oseguera, Boyd, & Morita, 2017). African-American male teachers have a strong, positive impact on black male students` performance via enhanced sociopolitical awareness, acting as role models, providing a sense of cultural pride, engagement in the process of learning, academic confidence, etc. (Brown, 2012; Bush & Bush, 2018). Combine this with the long-standing inability of the U.S. public schools to provide adequate and equal learning opportunities for African-American boys and other marginalized groups in society, it is clear that the role and possible impact of African-American male teachers cannot be overestimated (Lynn et al., 1998). However, until now, the knowledge of experiences and voices of black male teachers is limited and often ignores individual voices, difficulties, and challenges (Thomas & Warren, 2017).

There is a growing body of empirical evidence showing that African-Americans face inequitable educational experiences (Bush & Bush, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017; Thomas & Warren, 2017;). African-Americans must respond to such challenges, which are particularly pronounced for males (Scott & Rodriguez, 2015). These challenges contribute to differences in the results of standardized tests, dropout rates, low college acceptance rates, high school graduation issues, and the problem of the *achievement gap*, corresponding to differences in completion of various degrees that significantly correlate with race (Scott & Rodriguez, 2015). As discussed by Brown (2012), African-Americans

are consistently characterized as underperforming when compared with other ethnicities and races. According to Scott and Rodriguez (2015), in the state of California alone, the college degree completion for black students is as low as 9.2%, compared to 40% among Caucasian students. Furthermore, the total numbers of educational degrees that are annually awarded to African-American male students constitute only 2.5%. This is extremely low when compared to 32.6% awarded to Caucasian males (Scott & Rodriguez, 2015). As a result of such gaps and disparities, African-Americans account for only 5% of the U.S. teaching population. This number appears to be extremely low compared to the Caucasian population (71%) (Brown, 2012). According to Harrison et al. (2017), contemporary policies directed towards improving current academic performance of African-American males are inconsistent and fail to address the existing underlying issues, such as the underrepresentation of African-American male teachers.

According to the analyzed evidence there exists a major underrepresentation of African-American male teachers in the United States (Agee, 2004). These teachers have complex experiences, enabling them to serve as unique role models to African-American youths, particularly those growing up in fatherless households. According to Cartwright and Henriksen (2012), up to 36% of African- American males in the United States do not live with their own biological fathers. Such dynamics can be concerning since fatherlessness has been linked to numerous negative outcomes in terms of adolescent behavior and academic performance (Jupp et al., 2016). Importantly, according to the data provided by the United States Department of Health Services (2014), children from fatherless households are two to three times more likely to engage in different types of criminal activity, become addicted to drugs or alcohol, and face incarceration when

compared to their peers living in two-parent homes. According to Brown (2012), having more African-American male teachers can improve academic outcomes of African-American students from one parent households significantly, via the former serving as effective role models.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

Although significant efforts have been made to understand the specific experiences of African-American male teachers within the K-12 school system in the United States (Agee, 2004; Walley, 2018), little is known about daily commitments, obstacles, and issues faced by this specific group of teachers. Furthermore, their contribution to academic excellence of children in general and African-American male students in particular have not been properly assessed. Therefore, such research gaps may be addressed by conducting an empirical study focusing on individual experiences and the professional identity construction process among African-American male teachers.

Audience

This dissertation aimed to describe and understand the various experiences of African-American male teachers currently employed in suburban public high schools (K-12), and how these teachers negotiate their unique professional identities through various discourses relevant to their cultural and ethnic background. The intended audience of the research includes different groups of stakeholders. First, the audience includes stakeholders as policymakers responsible for designing and creating policies that regulate and guide the teacher hiring and integration processes, and therefore can contribute to increasing representation of African-American teachers within the U.S. K-12 school system. Second, the intended audience includes scholars exploring the problem of teacher

identity, particularly in relation to a specific gender or ethnicity. Finally, the outcomes of the paper may be relevant to African-American male teachers themselves, particularly those actively working in K-12 education and encountering different obstacles and barriers due to their racial or gender background.

Preliminary Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore and critically investigate the various individual experiences and perspectives of African-American male teachers in K-12 school systems. The dissertation explored both negative and positive elements associated with the position and situation of African-American male teachers and understand how these complex factors interact and intervene in the creation of their individual professional identities.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted within the setting of a chosen public K-8 school in Texas, where five African-American male teachers were interviewed. The school was made up of 75% African-American students, 20% Hispanic students, and 10% Caucasian students.

Researcher`s Role

The role of the researcher included, but was not limited to, exploring and analyzing relevant scholarly evidence, designing the study set-up, and recruiting and interviewing the study participants. The researcher did not teach in the chosen public school and in this context was only an observer.

Definition of Terms

Academic achievement. For the purpose of this study, academic achievement was estimated through how African-American males viewed themselves and their school performance as shared during the interview. This included grades obtained during the school year, standardized test score results, and average rating in class (Walley, 2018).

At-risk students. those "… whose past and present characteristics or conditions are associated with a higher risk of probability of failing to obtain desired life outcomes" (Lewin, 2004, p. 2). Raby (2002), however, warned against overuse of the term *at-risk* as it may lead to justification of social control over specific groups of population. The present research specifically focused on learning deficits of African-American K-12 male students to better understand educational and social consequences of the identified issues and concerns.

Fatherlessness. The phenomenon concerning a family where the biological or adoptive father is not present. The concept includes situations when fathers who are absent full time as they live in a different household as a result of separation or divorce, or have passed (Agee, 2004). This term, however, also is used to describe situations when step or biological fathers are absent from the household for a prolonged period (Agee, 2004).

Negative behaviors. This is another important concept which was accessed via exploring the perception of students of their own behavior. Negative behaviors may include but was not limited to number of discipline referrals, number of days absent, days in out-of-school suspension, etc.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The chapter represents an overview of the scholarly literature detailing the shortage of African-American teachers in the K-12 school systems. More specifically, the chapter included an investigation the historical aspects that have contributed to the differential experiences of African-American teachers, their shortage in schools, along with an exploration of contemporary issues relative to the studied phenomenon. The researcher also explores the role of African-American male teachers as role models within the context of the K-12 educational system and touches upon the relevance of black teachers being role models for fatherless black students in public schools. The chapter concludes by identifying a research gap and formulating the preliminary research questions that were addressed within the scope of the current study.

Theoretical Framework

The critical race theory. This study adopted the model known as Critical Race Theory (CRT), which was developed in the 1970s from the Critical Legal Studies Movement (Crenshaw, 1995). The emergence of both movement and theory was associated with recognition of social and racial inequalities in the United States. One of the key elements of the CRT is its inclusion of storytelling and counter storytelling. Such elements allow to identify, discuss, and dissect various oppression and discriminatory practices (Crenshaw, 1995).

The key rationale for choosing this framework was that it accounts for the various racial as well as other types of disparities in the educational environment. The CRT model benefits this study by accounting for various socioeconomic discrepancies in society and by understanding how black male teachers navigate through them within an

urban school setting.

African-American Students in K-12 Education: Historical Perspective

   Segregation and discriminatory policies. When exploring the issue of academic performance of the different racial groups of teachers and students within the U.S. public educational system, it is important to analyze and understand the historical context. This, according to Walley (2018), is particularly true for African-American students. Within America`s early public education system, this group of students historically had a rather disadvantaged position. More specifically, African-American students experienced significant difficulties when integrating, assimilating, or simply performing academic tasks in the K-12 classrooms. Such problems have emerged because African-Americans held a disadvantaged position, first viewed as private property, then over time as citizens with inferior rights, restricted to segregated schools and environments (Walley, 2018). Segregation was, therefore, an immediate obstacle many African-American students faced when entering public school systems. Officially, the segregation was formulated to create a safer environment for African-American students. However, such politics of dividing students based on their race created two educational systems that differed significantly as far as the overall quality of education provided. While Caucasian students received a higher-quality education, African-American students were consistently underperforming in academics, and made up the majority of school discipline numbers due to the poor quality of schools they attended (Jupp et al., 2016). Although segregation laws were eventually removed, according to Jones (2004), such lasting historical experience has left a highly negative footprint on modern day African-American parents and their children attending K-12 education schools in America.

In addition to segregation, Jones (2004) discussed the importance of dominant cultural norms that historically have played a highly negative role in social and academic performance of African-American students and other minorities. According to James (2012), historically, the dominant culture in U.S. society can be characterized as the one where "… male`s lives are structured by Anglo- white middle class, heterosexual masculinity – the socially constructed set of ideals, roles, values" (p. 470). The modern set of norms and expectations dictate how adolescents and grown men behave and what they are expected to demonstrate: dominance, athleticism, control, aggression, strength, and competitiveness. In certain situations, when males are unable to meet such norms and expectations, they experience psychological pressure that may lead to various social, mental, and other types of issues. According to James, African-American boys constantly find themselves in situations, particularly within the classroom environment, where they are marginalized and racialized due to existing stereotypes.

On a related topic, Coleman`s (1966) work, "Equality of Educational Opportunity," has been described as a landmark research on the impact of socioeconomic status on student academic achievement. According to Coleman, children`s backgrounds have a great impact on various aspects of their lives. However, the strongest impact comes from the high school years. In line with such argument, any type of socioeconomic disparity contributes to student performance within school setting. According to Walley (2018), poverty is particularly an important issue in the United States, where approximately 12 million children can be classified as living in poor households. Furthermore, up to one-third of these children are experiencing extreme poverty, where the families have a total household income below 50% of the currently established

poverty line (Juppe et al., 2016). In some of the states, such situation is particularly extreme, with Louisiana suffering the most. Children in poor households or those classified as living near the poverty level can be characterized as disadvantaged in relation to their academic and career prospects (Jones, 2004). Jones (2004) raised the point that the connection between poverty and academic performance was more complex than originally described by Coleman (1966). This relationship creates a multi-level problem, which can be analyzed at various levels: individual states, public school districts, classes, and individual students (Jupp et al., 2016).

African-American Teachers: Public School Context

  African-American male teachers. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in the problem of a lack of minority teachers in general, and African-American male teachers in particular (James, 2002; Lynn, 2006). According to Brown (2012), the original discussion and theorization concerning the role and implication of recruiting more African-American teachers can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. Much of the earliest discussion and theory was dedicated to the discussion of whether African-American male teachers were capable of positively contributing to or helping address inequalities African-American children faced in schools and non-academic life (Rury, 1983). These early works provided in-depth analyses of discourses and philosophies of teachers, as well as an exploration of their potential role in contemporary society. Although now the idea that the shortage of African-American male teachers needs to be addressed is widely accepted and agreed upon, Blackshear (1902), considered an innovative thinker and pioneer in his time, argued that recruiting more black teachers was insufficient or even harmful:

The Negro public school teacher has been more than a mere school-keeper. No

class of educators in any race has done more, all things considered. The coloured

teacher has been a herald of civilization to the youth of his people. His superior

culture and character has acted as a powerful stimulus to the easily roused

imagination of the colored youth, and the Black boy feels, in the presence of the

Black "professah" to him the embodiment of learning, that he too can become

"something." (p. 337, as cited in Brown, 2012)

According to the ideas expressed by Woodson (1933), although the idea of

African-American male teacher representation within the public school system as a

concern was interesting and important, it lacked practicality. According to Woodson, the

role of African-American male teachers was exaggerated in the context of their ability to

reduce the negative outcomes of discrimination and years of oppression. Brown (2012)

revealed that a number of Woodson`s contemporaries did not believe in the possibility

that African-American male teachers were capable of improving education for African-

American children to the same standards established by their Caucasian counterparts.

However, such discriminatory view and ideas were eventually abandoned, and a new era

of research on African-American teachers and students had started.

Many more recent studies have specifically focused on points that help connect

African-American teachers with their students. According to Lynn (2006), an

understanding of and exposure to African-American culture and street culture can serve

as an important bridge that can help build understanding, trust, and relationships between

the teachers and their students. In line with such an argument, Harrison et al. (2017)

noted that African-American teachers can not only better understand African-American

students, but also offer teaching that is tailored to their needs presented in language and manner that is easy to relate to.

Thomas and Warren (2017) provided an in-depth understanding of African-American teachers' unique roles and challenges. Brown (2009) conducted a qualitative study of African-American male teachers utilizing a qualitative-ethnographic approach. The research focused on the use of different techniques and approaches to design pedagogical practices to teach African-American boys. Similar to Harrison et al. (2017), Brown stressed that African-American teachers emphasized their role in improving academic outcomes for a very specific group of students—African-American male students. Brown also mentioned numerous challenges encountered by these teachers as well as coping strategies and pedagogical practices they adopted to address such issues. For example, many of the African-American male teachers used strategic roles—negotiator, enforcer, playful teacher—to stimulate and engage their class (Brown, 2009). Enforcers are teachers focused on discipline in the classroom, driven by their inner locus of control. This group of African-American male teachers maintains very strict discipline inside the classroom and ensures that the students abide by the rules during all times. Conversely, the playful teacher focuses on building trust and friendly relationships with students, even if he must sacrifice classroom discipline (Brown, 2009). This style of teaching always involves interactive techniques and creating a classroom environment that is friendly, safe, and informal. Finally, the negotiator is concerned with finding incentives and approaches to motivate African-American male students and find effective ways to encourage and engage them in the learning process. Some of specific techniques the negotiator utilizes involve implementing feedback loops, maintaining effective

communication, and listening to students to better understand their needs (Thomas & Warren, 2017).

Several researchers have provided different theoretical underpinnings and rationale for the importance of employing more African-American male teachers in the classrooms. Brown (2009) used gender-ethnicity matching theory to justify such need. According to such theories, specific ethnic and gender groups have their own unique needs, values, and aspirations that can be best addressed by representatives of their own sub-group (Thomas & Warren, 2017).

African-American Teachers and Their Identities

Being a role model. According to Agee (2004), there is an increasing need in U.S. schools to employ more teachers of color to reflect the increasing diversity of student populations and effectively address the needs of those students. As put by Gay (2000):

> The need for more Latino, Asian, Native, and African-American teachers in U.S. schools is unquestionable. But to make improving the achievement of students of color contingent upon fulfilling this need is based on a very fallacious and dangerous assumption. It presumes that membership in an ethnic group is necessary or sufficient to enable teachers to do culturally competent pedagogy. …. This is as ludicrous as assuming that one automatically knows how to teach English to others simply because one is a native speaker. (p. 205)

A significant body of work has been dedicated to how experiences and knowledge of African-American male teachers help improve academic and social outcomes for diverse groups of students, particularly African-American males (Jupp et al., 2016; Walley,

2018). Significant attention has been given to their curriculum, integration, and teaching experiences in public K-12 classrooms (Dixson, 2002; Agee, 2004). According to the argument developed by Agee (2004), black teachers bring a unique desire to construct their own identity as teachers; they often have to modify and refashion that identity depending on the surrounding environment. Only such a lengthy process of identity construction allows for meeting the diverse needs and expectations of students they teach. It has been pointed out that African-American female teachers have a unique gendered experience which historically has been ignored and even marginalized. While African-American males were traditionally discriminated against within different professional areas, African-American females experienced even more discrimination and were for a long time excluded from professional spheres in their communities (Jupp et al., 2016). Although in the Caucasian community teachers have traditionally been women, African-American females were often excluded from the discussion about education and teaching, even during the periods of time when the topic of race was a part of an active dialogue in the American society (Agee, 2004).

According to Gay (2000), various college and university teacher education programs are designed to meet the needs of Caucasian teachers, instead of accommodating and encouraging minority teachers, especially African-Americans. This poses a significant problem, particularly in the environment where the U.S. public school system experiences a significant shortage of African-American teachers along with decreased academic achievement of African-American students (Walley, 2018). According to Thomas and Warren (2017), African-American students are in desperate need of teachers who understand and appeal to their cultural and social perceptions.

James (2012) noted that African-American students also experience a problem of fatherlessness which has negative consequences for their social and academic achievement. Having more African-American male teachers, as pointed out by James, can help address some of these issues, as they can serve as role models for boys and young men who grow up in fatherless households. An accumulated body of research has suggested that children living in households with absent fathers are more likely to have various behavior issues and decreased academic achievement in school when compared to their peers (Jupp et al., 2016; Walley, 2018). According to Thomas and Warren, children from fatherless families are significantly more likely to get divorced or not get married at all. Such children are also less likely to ever enroll in and attend college, and even are more likely to end up in jail at some point of their life. According to a body of empirical research, fatherlessness directly or indirectly contributes to a number of juvenile negative behaviors such as school violence, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual assault, delinquency, and other types of mischief (Jones, 2004).

Importantly, several studies suggest that the absence of father differentially impacts boys and girls. According to an empirical study by Jones (2004), boys in particular are more likely to engage in drug and alcohol abuse as well as suffer from different types of psychiatric and mental problems during their life. Furthermore, Jones linked the absence or low quality of a father–adolescent relationship to delinquency and various symptoms of depression. According to Jones, different behaviors perpetuate such outcomes. One of them may be the lack of regular affirmative and nurturing behavior displayed by fathers. Studies have shown that children of all ages who receive regular affirmation and nurturing from both parents are less likely to demonstrate negative

behaviors and suffer from various mental issues (Agee, 2004).

Several studies have shown that a stable and healthy emotional connection and contact between a father and a child improves both socioemotional development and academic performance. Research has shown that children growing up in a household with more involved fathers consistently scored higher on various standardized assessment tests when compared with peers from fatherless households or homes where fathers, for various reasons, were not emotionally involved in the children`s life and education (Walley, 2018). Another study has pointed out that children growing up in fatherless homes can be considered a high-risk group for exhibiting risky and negative behaviors during their adolescence or at later stages of their lives (Walley, 2018). Such findings suggest that fathers are important contributors into academic achievement, processes of learning in general, and discipline of their children (James, 2012). Growing up in homes with actively involved fathers has also been linked to higher cognitive scores, higher levels of self- esteem, and confidence among children of different ages. Therefore, active engagement and interactions with a father can be considered an important predictor of healthy and effective cognitive development as well as social and academic performance in children (Walley, 2018).

According to the accumulated evidence, a father`s absence begins to have a negative impact in the infant stage, or even as early as pregnancy. For example, it has been demonstrated that the father`s involvement during the earliest stages of a child`s development positively contributes to cognitive activity through various activities that stimulate physical and brain development, triggering cognitive processes (Walley, 2018). Importantly, the presence of fathers has been linked to a higher rate of weight gain among

preterm infants as well as more effective breastfeeding (Thomas & Warren, 2017). However, apart from the earliest stages of human development, fathers have been demonstrated to play a significant role in the socioemotional, physical, and academic development and performance of adolescent boys (Thomas & Warren, 2017).

It has long been argued that fathers are important and necessary for children's development, particularly in the cases of adolescent boys (Pollock, 1998). According to Pollock (1998), the presence of fathers and their active involvement in the life of children helps the latter to learn to manage their emotional, health, and academic well-being. Pollock conducted one of the pioneering, longitudinal studies that followed the development of different boys, aged seven to 11, over an 11-year period. He collected quantitative data to identify relationships between exposure to activities with fathers and different aspects of adolescent behavior and development. Results indicated that engaging in activities with fathers was positively correlated with the likelihood of finishing high school instead of dropping out. In relation to emotional bonding and well-being, children growing up in fatherless homes experienced more difficulties building emotional connection with other people and had troubles socializing during the first years of adolescence (Pollack, 1998). Pollock also observed a cumulative effect on the level of the father`s engagement and the child's overall academic performance in school. According to Brown (2012), the absence of fathers plays a key role in the development of African-American children, both boys and girls. However, this problem is more acute for boys as they often lack the presence and example of a masculine norm, and therefore are more likely to develop abnormal behaviors (Bristol, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017). African-American boys, therefore, seek other role models and examples, such as those of their

mothers, which in turn produces a skewed effect on their sexual development and masculinity (Brown, 2012). In line with such considerations and argument, Bristol (2018) and Brown encouraged researchers to explore other possible role models, masculine examples that African-American boys may encounter outside their own households. African-American male teachers can be one such example that inspires African-American boys at school (Thomas & Warren, 2017). According to Agee (2004), having more African-American male teachers involved in student education and counseling can help mitigate the negative consequences of fatherlessness, contributing to improved academic and social outcomes for African-American students.

The process of building and constructing an African-American teacher identity is complex because of the barriers and complications faced in schools. For example, many of the textbooks and written recommendations actively used throughout K-12 learning environments are tailored to perspectives and attitudes of the Caucasian majority (Gay, 2000). Conversely, African-American teachers` specific educational goals, cultural perceptions and attitudes, and academic and social background are misunderstood and ignored (Agee, 2004).

Walley (2018) discusses the experience of Mr. Dillon, an African-American teacher in a public school in the United States. Mr. Dillon shared:

So, I knew black teachers, that was the norm for me. But they tell me this and they are excited even the white kids . . . because this is something different. And I do bring something different because of who I am. No class is alike. Every classroom should reflect that teacher. It's so moot because I get white kids who don't know much about African-Americans other than what they get from their

peers and that may not be the best representation. Then they see me and they are

like Wow! It puts more responsibility on me, and I relish it. (Walley, p. 108)

According to the experience of the teacher, "… it is not the ethnicity alone that makes a

teacher become a role model, but instead his/her knowledge, experience, and actions that

make students gravitate towards such children" (Walley, 2018, p. 108). It is important to

understand that African-American students, particularly males, need access to a variety of

role models, not just African-American ones. Although African-American male teachers

are indeed viewed as potentially the best role models due to their cultural and social

similarities and deep understanding of the students' needs (Agee, 2004), such logic

creates a dangerous situation where diversity of the workplace is overlooked and

underestimated (Thomas & Warren, 2017). Agee (2004) warns against adopting the

racist, discriminatory, and potentially dangerous point of view that children of color can

only learn from teachers representing similar ethnic background.

Being a disciplinarian. In the dissertation work conducted by Walley (2018), the

researcher identified a recurring pattern within numerous discourses shared by the

African-American male teachers in the public school. According to the interviewed

respondents, in a school environment and workplace dominated by Caucasian females,

African-American male teachers were perceived as disciplinarians who could maintain

control over "difficult" classrooms (Walley, 2018, p. 54). Often the teachers were

approached by their Caucasian colleagues to talk to African-American boys who

misbehaved and whom the Caucasian teachers did not how to approach. According to

Walley`s respondents, often Caucasian teachers were not properly acquainted with their

African-American male colleagues. However, they still operated under an assumption

that, due to the common ethnic and presumably cultural origin, African-American teachers had a lot in common with African-American male students (Walley, 2018). Such a notion was also supported by Brown (2012) who pointed out that such behavior on the part of the Caucasian colleagues has deep roots. According to Brown (2012), "… because Black male students are constructed as aggressive or unruly, Black male teachers are expected to play the role of disciplinarian and aggressor when interacting with their Black male students" (p. 331).

According to Walley (2018), the African-American male teachers themselves do not always agree that their role of disciplinarians is the most appropriate for them. In fact, many believe that such behavior on behalf of their colleagues is highly stereotypical and even discriminatory. Being an African-American male teacher alone does not guarantee that an individual teacher would be able to discipline and control the most difficult behavioral students (Bristol, 2018).

Being an exemplary pedagogue: Dismantling gender and race stereotypes. Several studies have focused on specific teaching practices and approaches adopted by African-American teachers. According to Lynn et al. (1999), African-American male teachers are commonly perceived as individuals responsible for adopting progressive teaching notions and practices. According to Pabon (2017), African-American male teachers are commonly perceived as culturally relevant because their teaching style is based on two of important premises. First, they believe that the process of learning is socially mediated. Second, they perceive knowledge as a type of social construct that requires critical perception and sharing with all members of society (Pabon, 2017). In addition, African-American teachers commonly experience teaching as an art form that

should not be simply dissected to various sets of technical knowledge or skills. Another important premise African-American male teachers commonly adopt is the one that influences them to develop a deeper relationship with their students, which often extends beyond the classroom (Bush & Bush, 2018).

Interestingly, according to Brown (2012) such dedication and focus on progressive approaches and teaching techniques stems from the fact that African-American male teachers were commonly perceived as regressive regarding teaching methods applied in the classroom. African-American male teachers, being reluctant to accept such stereotypes, therefore experience more pressure to add novel teaching approaches into their daily practices (Walley, 2018). Another possible explanation for African-American male teachers being identified as progressive and forward thinking comes from the common perception of these teachers being the most likely solution to address the problem of African-American male student underperformance (Brown, 2012). Because of this, African-American male teachers often experience pressure to find teaching solutions that would help black boys excel in their academic performance.

Due to the ongoing discrimination and overall low representation of African-American males within the U.S. public school system, this group of educators perceived themselves as responsible for dismantling "… hierarchies of power and oppression around the dimensions of socioeconomic background, language, ethnicity, race, and gender" (Walker, 1983, p. 4 as cited in Lynn et al., 1998). This observation is confirmed by the analyses by Walley (2018) and Pabon (2017), who both pointed out that many African-American male students grow up without seeing male role models or examples of successful males, who demonstrate respect for African-American females.

To compensate for such issues, African-American male and female teachers often choose to try to distill womanist and feminist thoughts and ideas into the classroom (Lynn et al., 1998), as if to overcompensate for the issues common in their daily lives and African-American communities. Such commitment to the ideas and ideals of feminism stems from years of oppression experienced by African-American women, along with the feeling of responsibility and sense of caring that lead to both individual and collective attempts to end such discriminatory practices within African-American communities in the United States (Bush & Bush, 2018). Indeed, Lynn et al. (1988) supported this idea by pointing out the following:

> Progressive African-American male and female teachers believe that because racism, sexism, and elitism are endemic to American society, they must teach a liberator pedagogy that focuses on the development among Black students of an American cultural identity and an awareness of social inequality. (p. 43).

However, as demonstrated by Walley (2018), individual teachers' experiences, perceptions, and beliefs play a key role in shaping their teaching approach and philosophy. Therefore, such generalizations should be critically reviewed and explored within each specific situation.

African-American teachers and pathology thesis. Brown (2012) suggested note the lack of, African-American male teachers from the standpoint of heredity, being a role model, and pathology thesis. During a long period of time, African-American boys were perceived as a high-risk group of students, who, due to several social, cultural, and economic factors, were more susceptible to follow the footsteps of their fathers and other African-American males within their respective communities (Clark, 1965). The

pathology thesis can be viewed as a framework which lays the foundation for understanding how harmful, risky, or dangerous behaviors are easily copied within a given community. Negative behaviors and practices are replicated within African-American communities as some sort of social machinery (Brown, 2012). Although such view is rather simplified. the processes and phenomena that take place are much more complex and intricate, and the logic can be used to rationalize the need for African-American teachers.

According to Pabon (2017), having more African-American male teachers helps to break the cycle of dangerous behavior within communities by demonstrating to the African-American boys that there is a positive path they can follow. In order to follow a more-positive path, boys must re-evaluate their system of values and beliefs and adhere to the new role model—African-American teachers (Brown, 2012). Bush and Bush (2018) pointed out that although African-American teachers can indeed show children an alternative pathway, they can barely reverse socioeconomic factors and issues that lead to social disparities and poor academic progress among African-American students. The discussed thesis is also closely related to the concept of *black male deviance*. The theories aligned with this concept mostly focus on a sort of social and cultural trap many of African-American families find themselves in, unable escape it due to their consistent poverty.

The studies focusing on the role of African-American males as role models, particularly teachers in a public school environment, were all based on a single premise. According to Brown (2012), the premise assumes that "… there was a young, impressionable Black boy who internalized the negative behaviors of Black male culture

whether or not the father was present" (p. 80). Brown (2012) also suggested that this hypothetical African-American boy was in permanent "… danger of becoming a typical Black man—absent from home and hanging around on the street corner, taking little responsibility for the welfare of his family" (p. 80).

   Student-teacher connection. According to Walley (2018), African-American students and teachers can establish a highly unique connection that has a solid underpinning of common ethnic and cultural origin. Moreover, such a relationship has been characterized as dynamic and strong (Thomas & Warren, 2017). Because many African-American teachers share similar life experiences and upbringings with their students in public schools, they can construct unique environments that are characterized as safe and understanding for ethnic minority students. Such environments encourage and engage African-American students in the process of learning, thereby helping them excel academically. It is important to understand that black teachers do not only create safe environments for African-American students, but for all students in their classroom as well (Jupp et al., 2016). Moreover, having different groups of students and teachers represented within the K-12 school system helps eliminate ethnocentric worldviews stating that only one specific race is associated with academic success and superior experience (Walley, 2018). Increasing representation of African-American males in education is also important for diversifying a field traditionally dominated by Caucasian females. Ensuring representation of ethnic minority males can help combat silencing and segregation experienced by black professionals (Agee, 2004). African-American male teachers can effectively serve as agents of change in undermining persistent stereotypes

and in creating an environment based on understanding, cultural acceptance, and safety for different groups of minority students.

Thomas and Warren (2017), in their qualitative in-depth exploration of African-American male teacher experiences produced evidence supporting the position of the previously discussed scholars. According to Thomas and Warren, Anthony, an African-American male teacher was one of the only teachers in the chosen public schools who had consistently "… deconstructed and problematized group understandings of teacher`s talk and actions that may have been perceived by students of color as inequitable" (p. 8). According to Anthony, such behavior was part of his professional teaching philosophy to approach any aspect of school life as a critical educator. However, according to Bettencourt, Musci, Clemans, Carinci, & Ialongo (2017), an overall experience of living one`s life as a minority or underprivileged group member often contributes to scrutiny and criticality because it creates a certain sensitization about issues.

Thomas and Warren (2017) introduced another important theme into the discussion that concerned culturally relevant pedagogy and was based on teaching methods and approaches that were culturally responsive and appropriate to the specific audience (group) of students. Such concepts acknowledge various differences between different ethnic, gender, and race groups of students in the United States and are based on the premise that such groups may have different needs and unique abilities and beliefs. According to Brown (2012), teachers who are culturally relevant view themselves as being highly involved and interconnected with the specific groups of students they teach. According to Bush and Bush (2018), African-American male teachers are a unique group of educators who are commonly perceived as culturally responsive and can effectively

help reduce academic and other types of performance-based gaps between Caucasian students and students of color.

However, according to Bush and Bush (2018), it is still poorly understood what constitutes a culturally aware and responsive teacher. Thompson and Warren (2017) believe that language and communication style are essential elements of building a connection with diverse groups of students and initiating a dialogue: "What teachers say, how they say it, and their intentions matter for producing favorable academic, behavioral and social outcomes for students" (p. 3). Bettencourt et al. (2017) discussed cultural modeling and language crossing as two elements that allow teachers to more effectively engage with their students, without conducting cultural appropriation of youth language or discourses. This practice can have numerous negative consequences since such behavior would be considered inappropriate and insincere by their student audience (Bush & Bush, 2018). Having more diverse and culturally responsive teachers can help avoid educators' cultural appropriation while at the same time maintaining a high level of connection between the students and their teachers (Bush & Bush, 2018).

Research Gap

For the present study, the researcher identified a gap in the understanding of African-American male teachers' experiences and identities. Although their identification as role models for African-American children has been explored, little has been done to systematize their overall contribution to the process of education within K-12 school system in the U.S.

Chapter Summary

The chapter concluded that there is solid academic evidence showing that the

achievement gap existing between African-American and Caucasian male students has historical roots. Understanding the problem of underrepresentation of African-American male teachers will also greatly enhance our understanding of how academic achievement of African-American males can be improved. The present review argued that consistent absence or shortage of African-American male teachers puts African-American male students into situation where they lack relevant role models they can observe and from whom they can learn.

Analysis of the collected scholarly evidence suggests that African-American male teachers have unique identities and often exercise teaching styles and practices that are distinctly different from those adopted by their Caucasian colleagues. Due to their experiences of living a life as Black men, African-American teachers commonly try to instill values related to equality, feminism, and humanity to their students, regardless of the students' ethnicity. In addition, African-American male teachers are more likely to develop a deeper relationship with the students, not only within a given classroom, but outside as well. Finally, African-American male teachers have been demonstrated to show a specific degree of criticality in relation to analysis of school conflict situations, problems and challenges faced by students, and student behavioral patterns.

Despite individual differences, these teachers share some similar encounters and experiences. Most of these teachers experience pressure to be role models for their students. District-level staff expect African-American male teachers to be able to effectively manage and discipline African-American male students. Despite such pressure, many African-American male teachers emphasize that their experiences, knowledge, and professionalism, rather than ethnicity and common shared cultural

experiences, that should help them deal not only with African-American male students but the student population in general.

Initial Research Questions

In line with the developed argument and conducted literature review, the following preliminary research questions were designed:

1. How do African-American male teachers experience education and being a black male teacher within the context of the K-12 educational system?

2. Which teaching practices do African-American male teachers adopt within the context of the K-12 educational system?

3. Which institutional barriers do African-American male teachers experience within the context of the K-12 educational system?

4. How are these barriers overcome and why?

5. Which unique identities emerge when exploring experiences of African-American male students within the context of the U. S. public educational sector?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of African-American male teachers and identify challenges they encounter in their work. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the methodological approach adopted within the dissertation to answer the developed research questions. As per guidance by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), each specific methodology-related choice (research philosophy, research logic, design, data collection and analysis tools, time frame) are described, along with their merits and disadvantages. Additionally, the researcher provides a rationale for choosing each specific decision and briefly outlines the alternatives considered. This chapter critically analyzes the specific strategy (case study) and explores how each of the chosen methods contributes to understanding and analyzing African-American male teachers` experiences.

Qualitative Research Approach

The chosen strategy for the study was a case study approach (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), this strategy is one of the most common ones adopted within the scope of qualitative inquiry. As per an argument by Merriam (1985), "The case study is, more often than not, embedded within discussions of qualitative research and naturalistic inquiry, and referred to interchangeably with ethnography, field study, or participant observation" (p. 23). The researchers choosing a case study as a strategy can collect data from the four major sources: (1) interviewing, (2) data analysis, (3) participant recruiting, and (4) participant debriefing. This study adopted interviews as a data collection tool.

Different researchers offer different definitions of the concept of a case study. According to Saunders (2012), a case study is concerned with collecting in-depth information and knowledge about a specific group in focus (e.g., environment, industry, organization), with the aim to develop generalizations based on the collected information. A rather comprehensive definition is provided by Wilson (1979), who argued that the case study should be viewed as a process "… which tries to describe and analyze some entity in qualitative, complex, and comprehensive terms not infrequently as it unfolds over a period of time" (p. 448). This study focused on the experiences of African-American male teachers in a specific educational institution a K-8 school in Texas and can be defined as a mono-case study (Saunders, 2012).

The discussed strategy had initially emerged in Social Science research; however, since then it has been widely adopted across multiple areas and disciplines: marketing, business and management, public health, and education (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This strategy was the most appropriate for the purpose of this study as it could help assist in the analysis of highly complex and multi-faceted phenomena and deal with diverse types of data. Another important strengthen of the strategy was that it helped the researcher gain an in-depth understanding of the chosen problem, relevant to its unique context (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). The expected outcome of adopting the case study strategy was detailed accounts of the roles African-American male teachers play in their professional environment.

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), researchers conducting primary studies, in addition to choosing an appropriate research strategy, also have to make an important decision concerning the philosophical paradigm. More specifically, the

researcher will need to choose one of the philosophical stances to guide their study: positivism, social interpretivism, or pragmatism (Saunders, 2012). Philosophical stance not only determines the selection of the specific elements of the research methodology, but also guides the process of how knowledge is developed and interpreted (Saunders, 2012). For example, the philosophy of positivism is associated with natural sciences and commonly resorts to a quantitative methodological toolkit (surveys, experiments, inferential statistical analysis) to answer the established research questions (Scott & Rodriguez, 2015). Importantly, the research philosophy also determines the specific role/stance the researcher takes in relation to data collection and knowledge development processes. According to the philosophy of positivism, the researcher should be an objective observer not involved in the course of knowledge creation. The philosophy of social interpretivism, on the other hand, emphasizes that the researcher is more than an objective bystander. Instead the researcher, together with the study participant, creates knowledge and processes it via the lens of personal experiences and knowledge (Easterby- Smith et al., 2012).

Background of the Research Design and Instruments

Research data for this study were collected using an open-ended questionnaire interview (see Appendix). The interview protocol was developed solely for the purpose of the study. From the research questions, different variables were identified. For instance, the first research question yielded the following variables. The dependent variable was positive experiences of African-American male teachers and the independent variables were relationship with minority students, cultural acceptance, and role model relationships.

The research interview protocol was developed thorough an iterative process. In particular, the researcher investigated the experiences of African-American teachers. To do this, the developed questions were aimed at assessing the teachers' levels of satisfaction, independence, cultural acceptance, and openness. As an addition to the interviews, the researcher used documentary analysis to cross reference the research findings. Moreover, the research made use of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) to design the theoretical framework of the research. CRT was used to interpret complex issues such as work place racism, bias, and discrimination. The researcher also reviewed demographic data related to the key elements of the survey, such as black employment levels and number of African-American male teachers in the U.S. A trend analysis was performed on the collected data.

The interview questionnaire was comprised of 10 questions. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed for a more interactive response between the respondents and the interviewer. In an open-ended interview more inferences can be drawn as opposed to a Likert scale or a closed-ended interview. From an open-ended interview attitudes, feelings, and observations can be made.

In any research, variables play a critical role in determining the direction of the study. For this research, several variables were identified. These were positive and productive experience, inter-racial relations, job satisfaction, and career development. Positive and productive experiences refer to the conflict-free and progressive relationship between African-American male teachers and their work environment. Interracial relations are the interactions between African-Americans and individuals of different races. Whereas the interviews provided an overview of the feelings and attitudes of the

teachers, an analysis of the variables ascertained the level of impact the relations had on the experiences of the black teachers.

Each of the above variables played a role in addressing the research objectives and in answering the research questions posed. The questions used in the interviews were also aimed at providing an in-depth view of the experiences of the teachers. The interview questions were designed with the variables in mind. The variables were also required to measure the perceptions of the teachers and their desire to continue with their chosen career.

Participants. Participants and sampling technique are other important practical considerations when conducting empirical research (Saunders, 2012). For the purpose of this study, a total of five male African-American teachers were recruited to take part in the research and share their unique experiences during the in-depth interview sessions. Practical considerations (availability of resources and the available time) were the key determinants of the interviewee population size. Additionally, the study by Brown (2009) recruited a similar number of participants (six), which suggests that the chosen number of teachers would be appropriate to answer the established research questions. The researcher used a non-probabilistic type of sampling known as *purposive sampling* (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Purposive sampling is a method of recruiting study participants with pre-defined characteristics, ensuring that the participants are able to answer the research questions (Saunders, 2012). The limitation of purposive sampling is that it confines generalizability of the study. This approach was chosen due to the strict applied inclusion criteria to ensure that all five teachers were capable of providing a detailed account on the roles and challenges faced by African-American male teachers in

the U.S. public school context.

The researcher applied inclusion criteria to guide the process of participant selection: (1) each participant had to be a high school teacher and had worked in this function for a minimum of two years, (2) each study participant had to be male, (3) each study participant had to identify himself as being of African-American ethnic origin, and (4) each study participant had to sign a written consent form (thus granting formal permission for the researcher to interview him and used the obtained data). Such inclusion criteria helped the researcher ensure that each of the five selected interviewees had sufficient professional experience and had been in the teaching profession long enough to help explore different roles African-American male teachers have to play within the U.S. public education system. Another important consideration of the researcher was in reaching the data saturation point (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). While the issue of sample size is defined and explored in more detail within the quantitative type of inquiry, what constitutes a sufficient sample population remains an open question within qualitative research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) recommended exploring the obtained dataset for reaching the saturation point— the volume of data where adding a new participant narrative does not contribute any key or new information. Once the information was collected from the five males, the researcher determined whether or not the saturation point had been achieved or not.

The researcher chose a K-8 school in Texas. Each interview was conducted in-person, with the researcher visiting the site to have one-on-one conversations with all five teachers. As per guidance by Saunders (2012), the researcher chose a quiet and secluded space (e.g., a library after class hours) to conduct the interviews. This helped to ensure

that the researcher was able to ask the required questions and the interviewee was able to focus on the questions and answer them in as much detail as possible. The researcher adopted the strategy known as in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore and understand the experiences of the interviewees. The limitations and strengths of the approach are discussed in the following sub-section of the chapter.

Selection of Participants. The study focused on five African-American male teachers. The interviewees, through the interview questions, were required to share their experiences in terms of career and societal expectations. The interview sample was limited because of resource and time limitations. Moreover, a non-probabilistic sampling technique was used. The downside of purposive sampling is that it limits the applicability of the research. Before the interviews were conducted, consent was sought from the interviewees. Because the main aim of the research was to explore the experiences of black male teachers, purposive sampling was used to select the interview participants.

Data Collection Tool. In-depth interviews were chosen as a data collection tool to collect qualitative data and answer the established research questions. According to Saunders (2012), in-depth interviews are commonly used within qualitative research because they allow the researcher to collect in-depth information and explore complex phenomena, such as people`s attitudes, perceptions, and experiences. For the purpose of the research, a total of five African-American male teachers employed within the public school system were interviewed. The current sub-section of the dissertation will discuss advantages and disadvantages of the chosen data collection tool.

First, in-depth interviews allow the researcher to collect information that is complex and cannot be transformed into numerical values (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

Experiences of African-American male teachers can be regarded as an example of such information. Importantly, Scott and Rodriguez (2015) and Rezai-Rashti and Martino (2010) utilized the same approach to explore the roles of the black teachers within the U.S. public high school system. This suggests that in-depth, semi-structured interviews are widely recognized as appropriate and utilized to study the chosen subject. Second, the semi-structured nature of the interviews provides the research with a certain degree of flexibility (Saunders, 2012). When compared to other research methods, such as questionnaires, in-depth interviews allow the researcher to alter and control the course of the study and pursue newly identified phenomena to gain a better understanding of the chosen topic (Creswell, 2009; 2012). Scott and Rodriguez and Harrison et al. (2017) reported great sensitivity in relation to the experiences of black male educators within the contemporary United States. These narratives and experiences, according to Harrison et al., are commonly questioned and not taken seriously. In line with such consideration, the researcher built trust with study participants and approached the topic with tact in order to avoid hurting feelings and to ensure the interviewees open up and share their unique stories. The researcher avoided questioning or doubting the unique experiences of the black male teachers, empowering them to share their stories and let their voices be heard.

The researcher used the interview questions developed to understand the experiences of African-American teachers and to determine what gaps in research still remained. The specific list of questions was taken from the studies by Brown et al. (2009), Boykin et al. (2006), Lynn (2006), and James (2002) after permission was received from the researchers. The first four questions helped to build a rapport between the interviewee and interviewer, while the remaining questions focused on more

important and relevant issues and experiences. Importantly, all the questions were formulated in a neutral way to avoid influencing the responses of the teachers as per guidance by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012).

Rezai-Rashti and Martino (2010) discussed the importance of being an insider when approaching the topic of black male teachers in public schools. Being an insider allows for easier understanding of the problem and helps avoid misinterpretation of the observed behaviors and various narratives (Scott & Rodriguez, 2015). However, being an outsider (not a black male teacher) can also be viewed as an advantage during the interview. This second approach allows the researcher to achieve a maximum level of objectivity in relation to the studied subject (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). To avoid misunderstandings, the researcher reviewed the answers with the interviewees to determine whether or not their words were understood and interpreted correctly. This way the interviewees were encouraged to follow-up on their own answers and validate the researcher`s understanding of their experiences, further strengthening the rapport between the interviewee and the interviewer. In addition, if the interviewee asked not to approach/discuss a certain subject, it was not probed during the conversation to respect individual choice and avoid making the interviewee feel uncomfortable.

Procedures

The specific procedures developed to collect data included (1) participant recruitment, (2) interviewing, (3) participant debriefing, and (4) data analysis. After receiving IRB approval, the researcher approached the participants prior to the interview to verify that they agreed to take part in the study and to obtain their written consent. Only after meeting all formal requirements, the researcher made arrangements to

schedule each interview and ensured that the developed schedule suited the professional

schedule and personal needs of each of the five teachers. As discussed above, the

researcher conducted in-person interviews and ensured that the settings where the

conversations took place were both private and relaxing so that each interviewee could

take his time sharing and reflecting upon relevant experiences. The researcher chose to

record the interviews using an audio recording device (Saunders, 2012). However, prior

to recording the conversation, the researcher sought permission to do so from each

interviewee. The audio recordings were transcribed into text, which were checked for

clarity and inconsistencies and were given to the interviewees for verification, ensuring

no misunderstandings (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Another important step was the

debriefing procedure which was conducted after the interviews and transcript

verifications took place.

  Storage of collected data. Different precautions were undertaken to ensure that

the interview results were protected from fraudulent access. The collected interviews

were transcribed and stored in a password enabled USB stick. Furthermore, the names of

the participants were replaced with pseudonyms.

Data Analysis

  As per guidance by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), the researcher adopted the

approaches known as coding and thematic analysis to analyze the type of data that was

collected—interview transcripts. Thematic analysis is a flexible technique, utilized when

there is a need to identify patterns in highly complex and diverse types of data (Creswell,

2009). In such cases, thematic analysis allows the researcher to identify reoccurring

themes and structure them (build hierarchies which reflect relationships) by using codes.

This study used the manual coding approach to identify themes and assign codes. The obtained audio interview recordings were first transcribed into written text, which the researcher carefully explored until the themes emerged. In the beginning the researcher identified as many themes as possible, and then examined which were valid and which represented variations of a single phenomenon. This way the initial list of themes gradually became shorter (Creswell, 2009). The final stage of the analysis involved constructing hierarchies that reflected how African-American male teachers are perceived in the United States public school systems and how this perception affects their roles and career trajectories.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative studies exploring experiences of different segments of population (particularly underprivileged) tend to be highly personal as they analyze a number of deeply intimate aspects of individual life (Bush & Bush, 2018). In line with such considerations, the issues related to participant safety, privacy, and anonymity were considered when designing and planning the study. In addition, the potentially sensitive nature of the research was also accounted for as per recommendation by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012). For the researcher, it is essential to first become aware of and understand the vulnerabilities and sensitivities of the black male educators who agreed to participate in the study. This group of individuals can be viewed as a minority within society in general, and the public K-12 educational system, in particular; and thus, it was crucial to protect the rights of such individuals.

To ensure participant privacy and safety, no personal data were collected from the black male teachers at any point of the research. Instead of real names, the researcher had

assigned each participant an alias. The researcher followed recommendations by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) and Creswell (2009) to protect identities of the individuals who entrusted their unique experiences and agreed to participate in the interview sessions.

As per guidance by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) and Creswell (2009), each of the interviewees was thoroughly briefed on the topic and nature of the research. Additionally, as per institutional requirements, the researcher obtained a signed and approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) document in order to conduct the research. The researcher also obtained a signed consent form from all study participants, providing proof that each participant voluntarily agreed to take part in the research. After the interview transcripts were obtained, each of the interview participants received a text transcript so that they could add any clarifications/remarks they felt were appropriate to correct any mistakes or issues that were misinterpreted by the researcher.

Trustworthiness

According to Saunders (2012), when conducting primary research, it is pivotal to account for such issues as validity and reliability. Validity, according to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), is concerned "… with whether the chosen data collection tool is indeed appropriate to answer the established research questions" (p. 238). Reliability helps determine whether findings obtained within the course of research can be replicated by other scholars under similar circumstances. To explore the experiences and roles of African-American male teachers, the researcher used in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Brown (2009) and Boykin et al. (2006) also applied such a toolkit to explore the experiences of male teachers; therefore, the study can be described as reliable. To

ensure content validity, the researcher conducted member checking and data triangulation procedures as per recommendation by Saunders (2012). Member checking concerned the researcher presenting the transcripts of the interviews to the interviewees. This way the study participants had a chance to ensure that no misinterpretation took place and the obtained records represented their unique experience as an African-American male teacher. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing the obtained findings to what is already known from the scholarly literature. This approach allowed the researcher to identify and explain any inconsistencies identified during the course of research (Saunder, 2012).

Potential Research Bias

Saunders (2012) argued that qualitative research was often criticized for being prone to subjectivity and bias. This criticism stems from the fact that while quantitative inquiry commonly adopts data collection tools validated and standardized across the field (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), qualitative research often uses tools customized to answer specific research questions (Saunders, 2012). This study used semi-structured interviews to understand the modern-day experiences of African-American male teachers in the public school system. One relevant source of bias is the *interviewer effect* (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). The interviewer effect is a complex phenomenon, manifested via the interviewer (consciously or unconsciously) influencing the participant during the course of the conversation, and causing him/her to adjust or change the narrative. For example, some interviewers may deliberately ask opinion-charged questions (e.g., "Do you agree that male African-American teachers are in the underprivileged position"). Interviewers may also unconsciously demonstrate their

agreement or disagreement with what the interviewees are saying by using words or body

language (e.g., nodding, shaking their head, shrugging shoulders) (Easterby-Smith et al.,

2012).

To minimize the interviewer effect, the researcher adopted the guidance suggested

by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012). First, the researcher carefully developed a list of

preliminary questions and avoided any types of questions that could lead the participant

in a specific direction (Appendix). The questions allowed the interviewees to express

their own position and critically reflect on their personal experience without being told

the researcher`s stance on the issue. In addition, whenever the interviewee provided an

answer to the question, the researcher refrained from saying or making any other signs

concerning whether he agreed or disagreed with the position expressed. Throughout the

course of the interview, the researcher maintained a respectful and polite approach,

allowing the teacher to express his own unique position instead of guiding him in a

certain direction. Another possible source of bias stems from the analysis and

presentation of data. The researcher adhered to the highest ethical standards and reported

all of the findings, regardless of whether they supported or contradicted previous studies.

Limitations

A few limitations were relevant to the study. First, the study was conducted at a

specific site in Texas where the interviewed African-American males had pursued most

of their careers. Therefore, it is likely that their experiences differ from those of African-

American male teachers working in other parts of the United States. Additionally, the

study focused on the experiences of male teachers employed in the public school setting.

As demonstrated by Brown (2009) and Dinkins and Thomas (2016), public and private

school settings differ significantly in terms of organizational climate, staffing, and employee and student diversity. Therefore, findings obtained during the study were likely be applicable only within the similar contexts, making it unjustified to extrapolate them on other organizational or geographical settings. This study can be characterized as being cross-sectional, as it only explores teachers' experience during the year the research was conducted (2018). This means that the research findings may not illustrate any trends or changes in relation to how African-American male teachers are being perceived in the United States and how they define their own role. Finally, one important concern was the interviewer effect discussed above. The researcher followed strict guidelines discussed by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) to avoid any subjectivity and impact (conscious or unconscious) exercised by the researcher when interviewing the five selected study participants. However, despite such effort, some researchers point out that the interviewer effect and associated bias are difficult to identify and minimize within the scope of qualitative research, which is prone to subjectivity and lacks standardization and rigor (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Chapter 4: Findings

Recent decades have witnessed a significant increase in the number of African-American students in American public schools. This shift in demographics has highlighted the need for a racially-diverse teacher population. This study hypothesized that African-American teachers were significantly underrepresented in public schools and that the underrepresentation created a role-model gap in the black community. This study was supported by the findings of Brosnan (2001) and Katzand Wishine (2001). The studies of these researchers found a positive correlation between minority teachers and an accommodative multicultural school environment. The current study builds on these findings and furthers research by analyzing the experiences of African-American male teachers, specifically K-12 teachers.

By conducting a case study on the current experiences of African-American male teachers, the researcher sought to put into perspective the coping strategies of these men and their identity development mechanisms. In general, the researcher theorized that an increase in the population of African-American students in K-12 schools should be complemented by an increase in African-American male teachers.

Using the developed research objectives and the formulated research questions, this chapter gives a detailed explanation of how the research was conducted. As mentioned above, this researcher utilized a case study approach and specifically a multiple case study design. In addition, an exploratory analysis technique was used to address the formulated research questions. The primary research question was, (Q1) how do African-American male teachers experience education and being a black male teacher within the context of the K-12 educational system? The auxiliary research questions developed for the research were (Q2) Which teaching practices do African-American

male teachers adopt within the context of the K-12 educational system? (Q3) Which institutional barriers do African-American male teachers experience within the context of the K-12 educational system? (Q4) How are these barriers overcome and why? and (Q5) Which unique identities emerge when exploring experiences of African- American male students within the context of the U. S. public educational sector?

Results and Discussion

The results obtained were from interviews conducted with participants. There were five interviews. For the purpose of anonymity, the interviewees are referred to as interviewee 1, interviewee 2, interviewee 3, interviewee 4, and interviewee 5. The purpose of the interviews was to gather information about the experiences, outlook, and perception of black teachers and to investigate the experiences of the black teachers in relation to the administration. In this case, the objective was to investigate the nature of the relationship the teachers had with the school administration. The researcher also wanted to gauge the career expectation of the teachers. In general, the survey sought to shed a light on the daily socioeconomic encounters of black American teachers. This involved an in-depth understanding of how the research questions would bring out these experiences. Specially, the researcher wanted to ascertain the factors that push black teachers away from the teaching profession. By investigating these factors, the researcher analyzed their correlation with black student enrollments and attitudes. The first step of the data analysis involved the collection and analysis of the interview responses. The interview responses were analyzed to ascertain the presence of descriptive statistics and demographic data. The data collected from the interviews aimed to answer the five formulated questions. The presentation of data is arranged by 10 interview questions with

supporting material from representative interviews. Together, these questions provided complementary responses that were used to gain more understanding of the experiences of black teachers. The collected data were also cross-referenced with existing secondary sources. Since the five participants were African-America males, the ethnic demographics do not vary to an important degree. This may be a limitation as the survey may lack diversity. However, secondary sources are used to compare the results obtained in the interview.

From the appended interviews, it can be noted that the data obtained from the interviewees is qualitative in nature. A qualitative research design offered the desired descriptiveness, clarity, and richness of data. Although most researchers prefer quantitative data, the studies fail to capture the personal experiences needed to understand the nature of the subject matter under study. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative techniques allows a researcher to properly scrutinize participants through inquiries and ad hoc questions. This means that the qualitative techniques were used to extract the variables and to quantify the observations. As such, the interview responses were first transcribed.

Profiles of the Interview Participants

The study was constructed on five interviews of teachers. The teachers were from different institutions, had different levels of experiences, and were teaching students at different levels. All the interviewees were African-American males. It should also be noted that the teachers have had different experiences and share different perceptions about their administration, district, and the teaching profession. A detailed description of the five participants is provided below. The names of the participants are coded as

interviewee 1, interviewee 2, interviewee 3, interviewee 4, and interviewee 5 respectively. The table below provides a summary description of the individuals by gender, race, experience, and teaching level.

Table

Interviewees by Gender, Race, Experience, and Teaching Level

Interviewee	Gender	Race	Experience	Teaching Level
Interviewee 1	Male	African-American	10 years	Elementary
Interviewee 2	Male	African-American	5 years	Elementary
Interviewee 3	Male	African-American	5 years	Elementary
Interviewee 4	Male	African-American	7 years	Elementary
Interviewee 5	Male	African-American	8 years	Elementary

Interviewee 1: male, 10 years' experience, elementary school teacher. The interviewee is an art teacher with 10 years teaching experience. He strongly believes in discipline and hard work as the main factors that bring about success. His view of life is mainly drawn from his life experiences and the experiences of people around him. He is a strong advocate of discipline and he insists on it from each of his students. He believes that most of the problems today are due to lack of discipline. He believes that the hardest thing about being an African-American male teacher is the racist comments he receives, some of which may be intentional or non-intentional. The racist comments are received from white teachers, white students, and sometimes the administration. However, he states that no parent has ever treated him differently because he is an African-American male teacher. Moreover, he says that he receives overwhelming support from the school's administration.

For instance, he says that the school allows him to teach while at the same time pursuing further studies. He also says that the school arranges for career development programs and is intolerant to racism. The interviewee is an art teacher. He says that art has always been his preferred subject since his student days. He hopes to accomplish a lot of things as an African-American male teacher. In particular, he wants other students of color to see him as a role model and to be better than he ever was in school. He was inspired to become a teacher because of his love for art. The interviewee talked about art a lot, saying that art is a combination of three subjects in one. He elaborated that the three subjects are math, history, and chemistry. Furthermore, he explained that math is needed to calculate historical ages, history is in art because it traces back to centuries ago, and lastly chemistry deals with the mixture of colors. The interviewer spoke highly of the administration as being supportive.

This teacher interview was conducted inside the classroom during the teacher's planning period. he teacher is a tall man. His height is approximately 6'2". This interviewee had a community reputation of being one of the most respected teachers in the organization. His height gave him a commanding presence. He is both tall and heavy built. The interviewee spoke with an exemplary level of understanding and thoughtfulness that could only be attained through experience. The interviewee holds an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education, a master's in Education Administration and a PhD in Education. The parents of the interviewee were both renowned educators who influenced the interviewee to join the education sector. There were several themes that came up during the interview with the interviewee. These themes are discussed below.

Interviewee 2: male, five years' experience, elementary teacher. The

interviewee is a physical education teacher. From the onset, the interviewee was very

welcoming, and looked like a very relatable person. He has been teaching for five years

and he enjoys what he does. However, he had some reservation regarding the education

system in the country, especially the state testing system. He felt that the state testing

does more harm than good and that students who are not gifted academically get unfairly

locked out by the education system. He believes that the hardest thing about being a black

male teacher was mentorship. Apart from guiding students to the correct life path, the

interviewee argued that student mentorship gave students direct access to role models. He

said that for teacher mentorship, there were not many moments for a black male teacher

to learn and grow. He felt that all the parents and school administrators supported him

100%. He also felt that teaching was something that had not caught the eyes of African-

American males.

As an African-American male teacher, the interviewee supported a program on

campus called "Boys 2 Men." The program supports at-risk students that are

academically challenged. He was inspired to become a teacher by coaching a little league

football team. He loves to teach because he knows that he will get the chance to effect

societal change. The interview was conducted inside one of the coaches' offices on

campus. Although there was a little noise, it did not interfere with his ability to answer

the questions. The interviewee had an intriguing personality and a good sense of humor.

Among the interview participants, he was the oldest. Apart from being a local teacher, the

interviewee had experience interacting with the black community during his time as a

basketball coach. Compared to the other interviewees, this interview was the easiest to conduct because of the availability and flexibility of the interviewee.

Interviewee 3: male, five years' experience, elementary teacher. The interviewee is a first-grade teacher and coach with over four years' experience and was interviewed inside his office. The interviewee is a very tall coach and looks very athletic. He has a physique of someone who is actively involved in sports or someone who was an athlete when he was younger. He is passionate about students achieving their goals. He feels that the worst thing about the school system today is the unrealistic expectations that teachers place on students. He says that teachers are usually forced to play a lot of roles in a school setting—a teacher, a parent, a mentor, and a role model. He seems to think the hardest thing about being an African-American male teacher is that they are out-numbered compared to other races. He thinks that this can sometimes lead to unfair treatment, racism, or discrimination. He knows that he is teaching the subject area he wants to teach and just recently became a performance coach on campus. As an African-American male teacher, he hopes to set the bar high for African-American male students. He wants young African-American students to know that they can achieve anything they want in life. He was inspired to become a teacher when he was in the third grade. By the time he was in third grade he was already helping his peers with their assignments.

Being a married man with children in the education system, the interviewee had a good understanding of the importance of education to the younger generation. All his children are in elementary grades. The interviewee became a teacher because his parents were also teachers. His parents are very respected teachers within the community. The interviewee was born raised in the community in which he serves as a teacher. He

attended a local high school and went to a local university. Today, he holds a master's degree in Education Administration.

Interviewee 4: male, seven years' experience, elementary teacher. The interviewee is a teacher with seven years' experience. The interview was conducted inside the principal's office, and the space was large and quiet. The interviewee began by sharing his perspective about the current education system and how it is limiting black Americans. Specifically, he felt that the limitation created by the system has led to a lack of discipline and rebellion among black students. For black Americans to benefit from the systems, he felt that there needed to be a higher level of discipline, both from the students and school administrators. The interviewee felt that the worst thing about the school system today was the discipline system.

He believed that students need to be disciplined. He is a retired city employee and believed that discipline was the right way to guarantee student achievement. As a staunch Christian, he went on to say that it was biblical to discipline students. The interviewee also felt supported by the school administration and the school district. He started a program on campus called "Boys 2 Men." This program assists at-risk students facing issues in life. He believed that this program would set the bar high for all young students to improve academically. Moreover, the interviewee was a high school football coach before he started teaching at the elementary level full time. He hoped to see students that he mentored graduate and reach higher than he ever reached.

The interviewee was very passionate about education in the area because he grew up in the housing projects of the same city. From his experiences, he explained that he had a very strict parenthood, which molded his aspirations from a very young age. The

interviewee was very opinionated and had a very outgoing personality. Prior to the interview, the researcher was able to observe the teacher while he taught. The interviewee had outstanding classroom management skills. All students were focused, responded well to his instruction, and asked for clarifications whenever they needed. His class had a neat and welcoming environment that was conducive for active learning. Unlike other interview which were interrogatory, this interview felt like a casual conversation between long lost friends. The interviewee and researcher shared similar perspectives about the education system and the state of black teachers.

Interviewee 5: male, 8 years' experience, elementary teacher. This interview took place in the interviewee's office during his lunch break. The interview was conducted while he was eating. The interviewee started by expressing his concerns about the current education system and the plight of African-American teachers. He believed that the biggest pitfall of the current education system was the testing system. He thought that once the state stopped mandatory testing then students would be able to fully learn. He believed that the hardest thing about being an African-American teacher was the lack of professional development. He also cited the lack of professional development from his administration and district. He wanted to see students not only go to college but to become something out of life and to inspire others. He said that he loved when students came back and visited him and told him all about their success stories in life. He was inspired to become a teacher because of his mother. He believed that educators were doing the "real work," educating society. He believed that every day was another day to educate society. He said that some parents didn't support him because he was a black

male teacher, but he also knew that his race was out numbered. He felt that even without the full support of parent he would still push to educate society.

Thematic Analysis of the Transcribed Interviews

This section provides a thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews obtained in the research. Each of the statements was analyzed with a view of obtaining and investigating a reoccurring theme. Data are reported from multiple interviews below each of the 10 interview questions. While individual interviewees all responded to the 10 questions, only selected statements are reported; thus, representative data from all interviews was condensed to the most relevant material.

1. **What is the worst thing about the school system today?**

Interviewee 5 spoke for the group when he indicated that he had reservations about the education system. Like two other interviewees in this study, he cited limitation in the education system. He stated:

> The testing system employed is limiting, especially to students from disadvantaged homes. Blacks are being excluded from the education system on the basis of their ethnicity. In the long run such exclusions create a sense of fear among minority black males.

2. **What is the hardest thing about being a black male teacher?**

Interviewee 1 explained that the hardest part about being a teacher is racist comments. In explaining how he encountered racism, the interviewee explained that racism comes from different parts of the world. It can be assumed that this teacher's environment may have people who are racists. They may be fellow teachers, students, or parents. The school may also contain a predominantly high number of Caucasian employees and students, which may be the cause of racism remarks.

Interviewee 2 was strongly opposed to the current systems of education. He stated that:

> The education system, especially the testing system, is prohibitive and oppressive. I say this from the difficulties of my own experience. Most students who have talents in other areas of life are sometimes limited because the education system prioritizes testing.

When asked about the problem facing the African-American teachers, the interviewee also asserts that there is a shortage of mentors in the African-American community.

Interviewee 3 felt that the whole education system sets unrealistic expectations for both students and teachers. He felt that this hinders their experiences and dampens societal progress. He believed that teachers need to be empowered by the education systems to be able to play the many roles that they have. In particular, the interviewee felt that there was a gap between what the education system provides and what students experience.

Interviewee 4 was concerned about the discipline level in schools. As a disciplinarian himself, the interviewee believed that teachers should be allowed to enforce discipline in academic institutions. Discipline is a crucial factor for most schools. According to most researchers, discipline is a key component of academic achievement and student growth. The interviewee completely agrees with this perspective.

3. **Do parents of your students treat you different as a black male teacher? And if they do, what are some of the things that make you think so?**

On this topic, Interviewee 4 spoke for the group, stating:

> My experience as a teacher sheds a different light about the experiences of black American teachers. Although I feel supported by parent, I don't feel the support is enough. I feel that education among blacks can be improved by a radical increase in discipline amongst black students.

Research has shown that black students are more prone to disciplinary issues compared to their Caucasian counterparts. It should also be noted that the teacher is supported by the school's administration. Thus, it can be inferred that the teacher has generally positive interactions with the school's administration.

4. **How do you personally feel about their only being two% of black male teachers in America? Does this make you feel less effective in being able to perform well on the job?**

Interviewee 1 expounded that the racist comments do not come from parents. He stated that:

> Most average blacks are treated as inept and incapable while the opposite is true. This treatment is unfair and unwarranted because black teachers put the same amount of effort in teaching compared to white teachers. I am just an average classroom teacher. Teaching is my calling and I don't have the skills that make me special compared to the average teacher.

As discussed in earlier chapters, most teachers who face racism have low self-esteem because of students and parents, which may significantly affect their teaching ability, ultimately affecting a student's education. In addition, institutions that have racist environments limit the career advancement of victims of racism. Although the Interviewee 1 recognizes that racism exists around him, he pointed out that it has nothing to do with the administration.

Interviewee 3 did not feel that racism was a problem. He also said that parents did not treat him different because he was black. He said:

> The biggest problem is that black teachers are outnumbered. This is a very big concern for the country. The fact that the population of African-American teachers is low, it means that their experience may not be ideal as expected. Most researchers see the problem of low black teacher population as an unavoidable population issue. The low black population has a significant negative influence on

the cultural perception of most black Americans. There is a general perception that, by imparting kids with practices of white kids, the cultural diversity of black Americans is negatively impacted.

Interviewee 5 specified that he did not feel less effective as a black teacher. In fact, he saw it as an opportunity to inspire other people from the black community into the teaching profession. In addition, the interviewee felt that more opportunities need to be given to black students in order to increase the population of male black teachers.

5. **Are you teaching the subject area that you want to teach?**

Interviewee 1 indicated that his inspiration to become a teacher came from his love of art and history. It can therefore be argued that the interviewee is in the right career, and he enjoys himself as a teacher. This is perhaps the reason why he is positive about being a role model to black students. His answer was a thematic issue that addressed research question five: Which unique identities emerge when exploring experiences of African-American male students within the context of the U. S. public educational sector?

Based upon conversation with Interviewee 2, it was observed that the teacher had a lot of support from the administration. The positive experience in turn relates to a positive and progressive work environment. It is possible that the interviewee is a role mode to a lot of students who may be feeling trapped by the education system or those that are targets of racism. Overall, this interviewee stood out because of the mentorship initiatives and his passion for teaching and coaching.

6. **Do you feel supported by your school district and administration?**

Interviewee 2 responded to this item, noting:

> I and other fellow teachers receive 100% support from the administration. Am sure that the positive interaction contributes a lot to the positive experience both

for us teachers and the students. From my experience, I have noted that teachers who are passionate in the work environment have a more productive and supportive experiences compared to those who are not. In terms of racism, I have not experienced any within the school.

Interviewee 3 indicated that he has had a positive and fulfilling teaching experience. He also loves the subject he teaches. In the interview, the interviewee said that he was passionate about teaching and that he had wanted to be a teacher since he was in the third grade. Although he has problems associated with some other African-American teachers, it can be argued that this teacher has had a positive teaching experience and is driven by his work. The teacher also spoke in a way that was inspiring to African-American students and aspiring teachers. He can therefore be considered a mentor and role model.

Interviewee 5 was frustrated and hopeful at the same time. The interviewee was frustrated about the lack of support for professional development of African-Americans teachers. He stated:

> I feel that lack of support is the main reason why African-American males do not pursue teaching. I make this argument because professional development is one of the key aspects of career development. Without professional development, individuals may lack the academic qualification required to enter a specific profession. Parents do not support my overall mission in my classroom. However, I don't feel as parents treat me differently as a black male teacher.

7. **Do you face unrealistic expectations as a black male teacher? Does your school administration require more of you?**

Interviewee 1 provided a representative comment, noting:

> I appreciate the fact that the administration is a strict and intolerant towards racism. The administration is also supportive when it comes to personal development. This is one the main reason why I love this particular institution.

Another key factor that arose during the conversation with Interviewee #4 was the importance of accountability among teachers. The interviewee believed that black teachers had to make other teachers accountable for any negative action towards black students. The interviewee was also receptive to the idea of holding the administration of any school responsible for any racist behavior. Overall, the thinking of the interviewee demonstrated his appreciation of integrity. The main themes in this interview were discipline, mentorship, cultural support, cultivation, and being a role model. Interviewee #4 was comfortable about the subject he taught. He also felt that he received the right support from the administration and the parents. The interviewee also spoke about cultural support. This was one of the major themes of the conversation. He emphasized the importance of student support from families and from black teachers. He highlighted the fact that some students may lack support from home.

Interviewee 5 felt that he was very competent in his subject area, but he was significantly unappreciated. In response to question 7, he expounded that the administration was indeed unrealistic with its expectations.

8. **What do you hope to accomplish in your teaching career as a black male teacher?**

Interviewee 1 brought up the issue of *validation*. Validation is the feeling of being valued or wanted. Interviewee 1 provided the following comment on this item that was representative of the group:

> Am not just a role model to students but also to fellow teachers. In this regard, I see myself as a person capable of nurturing and building young talent. In the future, I want to develop black teachers to become agents of societal change. As a role model, I have realized that there is a role model gap facing the black community. Most needy students find me relatable because they see a genuine sense of care and concern.

Interviewee 2 had taken steps to address this problem. He talked about the "Boys to Men" initiative in which male teachers serve as mentors for young black males to help them become academically responsible. The interviewee felt that, for the community to grow, there was a need for more mentors and role models. It can therefore be argued that the interviewee is a role model who is passionate about his community. It can also be ascertained that the interviewee has a positive interaction with the administration of the school.

By cultivating educators, Interviewee 4 felt that role models could be nurtured and supported. The interviewee felt that, because of the low population of black teachers, they did not have any real power of bringing about change. In this regard, the interviewee urged black teachers to cultivate each other. By cultivating each other the interviewee meant recommending each other to top positions. Several themes can be observed from this interview. These include the failures of the school system, lack of support, personal development, and that black teachers are outnumbered.

9. **Do you feel like your students treat you differently than the other teachers on campus?**

According to Interviewee 1, most black people are not properly recognized for their contribution to society. History also shows that black people faced significant devaluation of their societal contribution. However, the interviewee felt that the institution he worked for appreciated he efforts. Importantly, he felt that the administration recognized the role of black teachers in the school as more than teachers.

From the conversation with Interviewee 2, it was obvious that he strongly valued the cultural value of education. To him, education is a sure means of enabling societal change within the black community. He stated that:

> The curriculum and the education system should have a sense of cultural relevance. This will limit the marginalization of certain races. I feel that the black community needs more individuals who are culturally conscious.

Interviewee 5 mentioned that he felt that being black was limiting him from taking advantage of personal development opportunities. He felt that the institutions didn't give black teachers enough support. For that reason, white students treated him differently.

10. **What inspired you to become a teacher?**

Interviewee 1 argued that he was inspired to become a teacher in order to change the lives of people in his community. Several themes emerged from the interview. These included mentorship, being a role model, racism, and the support of the school's administration. The first response addressed the first research question: How do African-American male teachers experience education and being a black male teacher within the context of K-12 educational system? The interviewee was also asked about the drawbacks of the current school system. The following was his response to interview questions 1 and 2.

Interviewee #2 also pointed out the value of education as a tool of social transformation and alleviation of poverty. The interviewee felt that blacks were for a long time forbidden to benefit from education. For example, he cited that black slaves were forbidden from reading. Moreover, the interviewee felt that education has an equalizing effect in any given society. The equalizing effect prevents discrimination and allows

social mobility. He felt that black teachers needed to fully emphasize the value of education to their students.

The conversation with Interviewee 2 also brought into focus the theme of understanding. He felt that above everything, teachers had the responsibility of understanding their students. He also expressed a belief that teachers had the responsibility of ensuring the perspective of their students were healthy, strong, and uplifting. The interviewee felt that teachers had the ability to sway public opinion on matters regarding education. The interviewee felt that this was especially relevant because of the high rate of urbanization today. He stated:

> I feel that teachers need to treat all students equally. That is, smart children and struggling students need to be accorded equal treatment. With this commitment, there will be a reduction on the tendency of teachers focusing only on smart students. Moreover, teachers have to step out of their comfort zone in order to realize improved student performances.

The main themes that stood out from the comments of Interviewee 2 included making and impact, mentorship, being a role model, the population of African-American male teachers, and academic expectations.

Interviewee 3 was very excited about the role of teachers in making societal impact. He said:

> The most important part in being a teacher was impacting the lives of students positively. Am of the opinion that teachers should have the responsibility of creating meaningful connections to students. I feel that this is a quality that all teachers should have, not just black teachers. Am very passionate about making an impact because I was positively impacted by a teacher. I grew up in a very challenging environment, but I was able to overcome the challenges because of the positive impact teachers had on me.

Interviewee 4 was also very passionate about being caring and sharing knowledge. He felt that, as role models, black teachers needed to be approachable and tolerant. The interviewee felt that black teachers can play an active role in countering the negative stereotype associated with black males. Black teachers can also enforce discipline, hold students accountable, and counter negative narratives. Moreover, the interviewee argued that black teachers in general give black students a career option.

Interviewee 4 felt that teachers and parent did not treat him differently because he was black. In terms of inspiration, the teacher believed that he had a role to play in cultivating blacks in his community. Cultivation was a theme that stood out during the conversation with the interviewee. The interviewee perceived education as a way that black teachers could reach out to young black males affected by societal stereotypes. In particular, the interviewee spoke of two types of cultivation: cultivation of students and cultivation of educators. By cultivating students, the interviewee felt that teachers and parents could work together to cultivate a culture of accountability and responsibility among students.

Although Interviewee 5 was concerned about the priorities of the education system, he was very passionate as a teacher. He said that he would like to mentor more black males in the teaching profession. He said that he became a teacher because he would have the ability to effect change. He is a classic example of a person trying to change the system from within. He believed that his mother inspired him to become a teacher because of her commitment to education. The interviewee argued that, "Teaching is an important profession that should be respected within the black community and outside."

Chapter Summary

Overall, there was a general trend visible from the interviews conducted. Most interviewees seemed to have a common perception about the education system, teacher expectation, mentorship, being a role model, and the general state of an African-American male teacher. From the qualitative data analyzed, it is clear that most teachers have an equal share of happiness and frustration. The biggest frustrations come from a lack of career development, racist comments, a lack of mentors, a shortage of role models, and the low population of African-American teachers in schools.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter gives a brief conclusion of the findings discussed in chapter 4. The chapter also gives recommendations concerning the subject matter. The interviews presented in chapter 4 show the wide range of issues faced by African-American male teachers in the K-12 school program. As discussed in the first chapter, there has been a considerable shift in the demographic makeup of public schools. However, this shift has not been effectively reflected in the racial composition of teachers.

The researcher employed qualitative techniques in gaining answers to the research questions addressing its objectives. In particular, the CRT (Critical Race Theory) was used to formulate the research questions and the research objectives. The aim of the research was to analyze the school system through the perspective of five teachers. The response of the teachers was purely based on their experiences and perception. Documentary analysis was used to support the research and to counter reference the findings for accuracy.

The objective of this study was to investigate the experiences of K-12 African-American teachers. With this objective, a survey in the form of interviews was collected from five African-American teachers. The survey utilized theoretical strategies set out in the CRT (Critical Race Theory). Specifically, CRT was chosen because of its ability to provide insights of multifaceted range of data sets (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Data were collected through a single person, one-on-one interview. The central question of the research was developed through an analysis of the life experiences of the respondents.

Overview of Findings

Key findings are summarized below, organized by research question. After a short summary statement, the researcher briefly comments on the finding and makes explicit reference of how that finding aligns with existing research. Here the researcher attempts to broaden the discussion, placing the findings from the current work and a broader educational context.

Research Question 1. How do African-American male teachers experience education and being a black male teacher within the context of the K-12 educational system? The findings of this research show the need of a paradigm shift in the perception of African-American teachers and public schools in general. The subject of public-school teachers is important not only for African-Americans males but for the country in general. For an all-inclusive education system, schools in America need to shun issues like racism. The negative effect of racism is that it impedes the education quality of both the teacher and the student. As seen from the interviews, some institutions have normalized racism. The lack of role models and mentorship emerged as one of the biggest concerns of African-American male teachers.

The African-American male teachers experience education in a different way than black female teachers and white teachers. Since there are few male teachers, their voices are rarely heard. Thus, African-American male teachers are likely to experience some form of stigma in the context of the K-12 educational system. Additionally, they experience education as something inherently challenging since they have to put in extra effort to ensure that they transform the educational trends. This is due to the fact that they must create an image that represents them positively among students and colleagues.

Furthermore, a small percentage of African-American male teachers engage students in early childhood education. As such, it becomes difficult to make a connection with the learners at the K-12 level.

Research Question 2. Which teaching practices do African-American male teachers adopt within the context of the K-12 educational system? Most participants explained how cultural intersections played a role in improving their relationship with students and their communities. This relationship was also evident in a research conducted by Brown (2009) and Kunjufu (2005). These studies revealed how the socioeconomic background of teachers had an influence on student perception. Moreover, this study highlighted how black teachers use their socioeconomic traits to reach out to students.

Culturally responsive teaching practices are mostly adopted by African-American male teachers in the context of the K-12 educational system. In most cases, they tend to link pedagogy with experiences and make it an actual practice. The African-American teaching practices are drawn from the need to create validation from cultural experiences (Sun, 2018). Thus, it is common for them to feel the pressure of the educational institution for the need to conform. Furthermore, African-American male teachers tend to base their teaching practices in the K-12 educational system on disciplinary approaches. It is for this reason that most of them take the role modeling stance to encourage positive behaviors.

Research Question 3. Which institutional barriers do African-American male teachers experience within the context of the K-12 educational system? The unexpectedly low number of black teachers was also a key theme in this paper. All five participants

shared their perception on the low number of black male teachers in the K-12 education system. Because of the low black male teacher population, it can be argued that existing teachers face a high level of isolation. Findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Brown (2009). All the participants were, however, comfortable with their level of participation in terms of their relationship with minority students.

One of the critical institutional barriers faced by African-American male teachers is racism in K-12 schools. For decades, schools have systematically propagated inequality, which has marginalized African-American male teachers. As such, they are not accorded the required compensation for their effort which demotivates them (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevárez, 2017). The racism issue has created disparities in the K-12 education system to the extent that most of the teachers prefer to be in other fields. The lack of initiative to increase the number of African-American male teachers is a barrier that exists in the context of the K-12 education system. In most cases, the school administrations do not place emphasis on the need to retain them or increase their numbers in the classroom. This is reflected in the minimal percentage representation of the African-American male teachers in the education sector.

Research Question 4. How are these barriers overcome and why? In conclusion, the study unraveled a wide range of feedback that both supports and challenges existing research. These include issues such as workplace discrimination, white privilege, and racism. The research was consistent with the findings of both Kunjufu (2005) and Toldson (2013), especially on the aspect of white privilege. In terms of workplace opportunities, the research is consistent with the findings of Kuzmic (2000), who found a strong correlation between these variables. Overall, the interview participants deeply

shared their personal experiences and gave out their perspective about the education system. All interview participants spoke of the lack of role models as a negative factor that hindered the professional development of African-American male teachers. Some respondents also spoke of institutional sabotage in their path of career development.

Despite the high level of institutionalized racism in the K-12 education system, a number of measures have been put in place to mitigate this barrier. For example, there are programs that recognize racial disparities and try to address them for the benefit of the students and disadvantaged teachers. In addition, an equity framework has been set up by many schools to ensure that all teachers are treated equally despite their cultural backgrounds. Additionally, the shortage of African-American male teachers has prompted the authorities in the K-12 education system to consider increased enrollment of racially diverse teachers. This is in a bid to ensure students, teachers, and the school benefit from having African-American male teachers involved in the educational system. The reason for the consideration for increased representation of African-American male teachers is to create a culturally diverse teaching staff that positively impacts the teaching field.

Research Question 5. Which unique identities emerge when exploring experiences of African-American male students within the context of the U. S. public educational sector? One of the dominant themes highlighted throughout the research is the importance of role models amongst black students. This view is supported by a previous research by Brockenbrough's (2008) who found that, although most of the participants considered themselves role models, students did not feel that they were role models. In addition, some participants shared the fact that they were not accepted as

models. This gap between perception and reality had a significant effect on the overall effectiveness of the education system. There was also a wide range of social cultural themes present in this study.

In this study, one unique identity that emerged when exploring experiences of African-American students was the concentration on perceived cultural behaviors. In most cases, they tend to exhibit traits that they believe best explains their identity. Thus, their behaviors are likely to be viewed from a negative angle with a teacher from a different cultural background. Additionally, when exploring the experiences of African-American male students, it becomes clear that they have developed the minority identity since they feel that they are left out in many educational processes. It is for this reason that most would tend to think that they go through the educational system because it is a social requirement rather than an opportunity for self-improvement.

Implication of the Research

This research has a few important implications regarding the current state of the K-12 education system and society. The first implication concerns the need to increase African-American male teacher's enrollment in the K-12 system. School administrators, principals, state recruitment agencies, and school districts need to focus on black male teacher development as a way of reducing inequality and improving teacher retention. For black male teacher development to be realized there needs to be an increase in the focus of education programs by authorities targeted towards black male teachers. This can be done through the enactment of progressive policies. Concerned entities should form initiatives and programs targeted towards the realization of inclusivity in the education system.

The other implication of this research is its focus on the ineffectiveness of counterproductive policies of school districts and education institutions. Primarily, this research highlights the ineffectiveness of policies meant to prevent racial bias in schools. In light of the experiences brought forward by the interviewees, policy makers need to re-examine existing policies, especially those relating to student discipline. Although having policies to prevent poor student behavior prevents indiscipline, empowering black teachers to mentor black students is more effective in promoting positive behavior. Mentorship is likely to reduce the time black students spend out of class by keeping them engaged in productive activities.

Another implication of the research is its contribution to existing research trying to relate the academic performance of black male students to the experiences of black male teachers. School districts need to evaluate their thinking of the relationship between black male teacher's development and current education performance. Along with this, education experts need to evaluate the impact of the mismatch in race balance in education institutions. This research also showed that there is a need for culturally balanced teaching practices. Other than tackling racial imbalance, policy-makers can also deal with gender imbalance. Extant research shows that increasing gender balance improves instructional delivery.

This study also has an implication on the societal role of multicultural education. Historically, teachers, in practice, have been advised to at least take a course that improves their perception of diversity. However, during practice, teachers are not given additional training with a view of improving their perception of multiculturalism. In practice, it is very difficult for teachers to improve their perception of multiculturalism.

Most institution have field placements; these placements are conducted over a couple of months. To improve the multicultural perception of teachers, it is advisable that these placements be extended to cover a complete school year.

Lastly, this study highlighted the importance of legislation targeting specific demographic populations. For instance, it can be argued that it is beneficial to have gender and race-specific instructional rooms in schools. Although this move may be controversial, it may help bridge the diversity gap in existing institutions. Research shows that schools which have instituted inclusive policies have been able to achieve success in the performance of black male students. Black male teachers have been a crucial element of the success of inclusive policies. Success in performance means increased literacy levels, which in turn improves the productivity of future adults and the nation at large.

Limitations and Future Research

This research was limited in scope and may therefore be inaccurate when making general inferences. For future research of similar nature, the researcher recommends an expansion of the sample to incorporate teachers in diverse school districts. This research was also limited to current and practicing K-12 African-American male teachers. The research was also limited in terms of participant demographics. Although there are some similarities among the interviewees, they had varying general experiences. Future researchers may also include retired teachers. Investigating both current and retired teachers may reveal additional insight about the subject matter.

The participant number was also very small. With only five participants, it may be very difficult to generalize the research results. With a small number of participants, there is also a potential of bias during collection and interpretation of data. Future research

should increase the number of participants. Having a larger number of participants increase the understanding of the specific subject matter.

The research only focuses on K-12 African-American male teachers. This research cannot be applied to individuals outside this demography. For instance, Caucasian K-12 teachers have a completely different reality and outlook of life compared to black male teachers. In terms of location, the study was conducted in only one school district. Future research needs to focus on a wider geographical area. To make the results more generalizable, future researchers can conduct a comparative study that analyzes the experience of black male teachers in comparison to Caucasian teachers. There should also be research that compares the experiences of male and female teachers. In addition, future studies can adjust different variables, such as the types of schools (e.g. charter) and the dominant race in a school.

Future researchers can also explore different research methods to analyze the subject matter. The current research primarily used qualitative models (case study). The researcher recommends that future studies focus on other methods and approaches that can be equally effective. This may include the use of focus groups, mixed methods, and phenomenon-ology. Apart from gathering basic research data, these methods may be used for cross-referencing and checking for consistency of measures in future research.

Future researchers can also focus on more complex items facing African-American male teachers. These include their recruitment process, mentoring, retention, and workplace environment. While there has been an improvement in mentoring and development processes for black male teachers, there is still no systematic process that has improved the effectiveness of black male teachers in general. There are still very few

teachers entering the K-12 system. Considering these factors, there needs to be an in-depth research that analyzes the policies enacted in the education system of different states. The research into these policies is necessary as it will enable policy makers to analyze why black male teachers faces different treatment compared to Caucasian teachers. The goal of future researchers should be to address the inequalities in the education system.

Conclusions and Recommendation

The findings of this research show how the current education system and the plight of African-American male teachers can be improved. All the interview participants are viewed as role models in their respective positions. Although most participants argued that the education system was not supportive, they are an example of how the negative aspects of the systems can be conquered. Apart from being role models, the participants, through their mentorship programs, showed practical ways that aspiring black Americans could utilize to circumvent a system that was designed to lock them out. Moreover, the participants, through their personal stories, showed how individuals could deal with institutional racism.

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Appendix

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

The following are some of the questions that may be asked throughout the five interviews. Although discussions will be centered on the experiences of the participants in regards to both negative and positive elements associated with the position and situation of African- American male teachers, and understanding how these complex factors interact and intervene to contribute to creation of their individual professional identities, each participant will, to some degree, determine the direction of the discussion.

1. What is the worst thing about the school system today?

2. What is the hardest thing about being a black male teacher?

3. Do parents of your students treat you different as a black male teacher? And if they do what are some of the things that makes you think so?

4. How do you personally feel about their only being two percent of black male teachers in America? Does this make you feel less effective in being able to perform well on the job?

5. Are you teaching the subject area that you want to teach?

6. Do you feel supported by your school district and administration?

7. Do you face unrealistic expectations as a black male teacher? Does your school administration require more of you?

8. What do you hope to accomplish in your teaching career as a black male teacher?

9. Do you feel like your students treat you differently than the other teachers on campus?

10. What inspired you to become a teacher?