AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF UNDERREPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE EDUCATORS IN PUBLIC URBAN SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements of the Degree

Doctor of Education

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by

ERNEST FIELDS

Dr. Barbara N. Martin, Dissertation Supervisor

DECEMBER 2021

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF UNDERREPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE EDUCATORS IN PUBLIC URBAN SCHOOLS

Presented by Ernest Fields, a candidate for the degree of doctor of education

moreover, hereby certify that, in their opinion, is worthy of acceptance.

Dr. Barbara N. Martin

Dr. Sandy Hutchinson

Dr. Hayet Woods

Dr. Jason Morton

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, all glory to God, with whom all things are possible. I must also pay homage to my late parents, who instilled in me the value of education and a desire to do my best. I wish they were here to see me become the first of our family to earn not only a four-year degree, a master's degree but a doctorate degree as well. To my wife, Wendy, thank you for your support and encouragement throughout my educational journey. To my children, Derek, Darren, and Shelyse thank you for enduring all of my time away while working on this degree program. I hope I have inspired you to strive for even greater significant achievements and new “firsts” for our family. To my sisters and brother, thank you for always having faith in your little brother.

To my cohort mates, thank you for the camaraderie and the encouragement to endure the challenge. I also want to thank Dr. Hutchinson for believing in me and providing me the opportunity to pursue being a member of this program. A special thanks to Dr. Martin, who provided the instruction, inspiration, and motivation I needed to make this dream a reality. Thank you for your mentorship. I could not have done this without you.

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF UNDERREPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE EDUCATORS IN PUBLIC URBAN SCHOOLS

Ernest Fields

Dr. Barbara N. Martin, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

While the demographic composition of classrooms is changing to reflect the cultural diversity of the communities' urban core, the vast majority of the teachers are White and female. Nationally, less than 2% of all public-school educators are African American males. This study examines the causes of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban public schools. The study's results were organized into three themes: mentoring, which was divided into coaching, inspiring, and encouraging; purpose regarding one's calling and commitment; and salary.

This study provided information that contributes to the body of knowledge significant to the field of study of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools, including recommendations for school districts and suggestions for future research on the subject. The study revealed the absence of African American male educators removes teaching as a potential career choice for African American male students. Boosting representation has to begin with initiatives to increase African American students' interest in the profession, increasing salaries, and incentives to attract new graduates.

Keywords: *Coaching, Purpose, and Salary*

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION

Background of the Study

Ever since the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* ended segregation in public schools, comparisons between minorities and White students' academic achievement have occurred. One of the earliest requests for data regarding the disparity was a stipulation to the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*. Section 402 of the Act required the commissioner of the Office of Education to provide the president a report regarding deficiencies in access to equal educational opportunities for minorities and members of other protected classes (Coleman, Campbell, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York, 1966). "*The Equality of Educational Opportunity Report*, also known as the *Coleman Report*" (Rivkin, 2017, p. 26), was the first to highlight the achievement gap between Black and White students. Since the Coleman Report, there has been considerable research and many publications written about this phenomenon, to the point the phrase "bridging the achievement gap" has nearly become a cliché. Though there has been some narrowing of the gap, almost six decades later, there is still a notable disparity in academic achievement between Black students and their White counterparts (Davis & Palmer, 2010; Gardner, Gleides, & Rizzi, 2014; Miller & Harris, 2018; Pabon, Anderson, & Kharem, 2011; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Measured by comparing the standardized test scores of White students to minorities, African Americans in particular (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2019) is the achievement gap. Researchers (Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman, & Chan, 2015) have shown that despite a statistically insignificant drop in test scores for White students attending predominately African American schools vs. predominately-White schools, White students outperform African American students on

standardized tests. Theorists (Langham, 2009; Singham, 2003) credited a myriad of factors as contributors to this phenomenon, including "biased standardized tests, tests that do not match the learning styles of black students, less money spent on educating black students, socio-economic differences, lack of motivation, negative peer pressure, lack of family support for education, [and] teacher biases" (Singham, 2003, p. 587). However, critics argue that neither poverty, biased tests, nor social factors are primary factors for the achievement gap, but claim lack of rigor, inadequate curriculum, and low expectations have the most impact (Langham, 2009; Singham, 2003). Many researchers (Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman, & Chan, 2015) agreed the achievement gap is at the root of many societal problems affecting African American males. These problems include dropout rates, poverty, crime, and the school-to-prison pipeline (Langham, 2009), and addressing it is the first step towards eliminating some of the equity issues plaguing America's urban core.

Researchers (Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman, & Chan, 2015) into bridging the achievement gap has produced numerous data-supported strategies for improving the academic achievement of African American students. Central to these strategies is schools employing highly qualified teachers, using research-proven and data-driven instructional practices, and valuing diversity (*School-based strategies for narrowing the achievement gap*, 2017). The research indicated that for African Americans and other minorities constrained by generational poverty, the family's socio-economic status could have profound and lasting effects on the academic achievement of students, but even more detrimental is the unequal access to resources, lack of rigorous instruction, a deficit approach towards education, and the underlying biases against African American

students (Ward, 2006).

One notable strategy claimed that increasing the number of African American male teachers in schools has proven to have a positive effect on the academic achievement of minority students (Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2018; Goldhaber, Theobald, & Tien, 2019; Kalam Id-Din II, 2017). The National Bureau of Economic Research conducted a 30-year study investigating the impact of same-race teachers on academic achievement. The study followed K-3 grade students randomly assigned to Black teachers and found these students were "5 percentage points (7%) more likely to graduate from high school and 4 percentage points (13%) more likely to enroll in college than their same-school, same-cohort peers… not assigned a black teacher" (Gershenson et al., 2018, p. 1). Similar outcomes were realized in a 2005 study of 100,000 African American students entering the third grade in North Carolina and were randomly assigned an African American teacher. The findings revealed that students who had at least one African American teacher had a 39% less chance of dropping out and were 29% more likely to enroll in college (Papageorge, Gershenson, & Hart, 2017).

Egalite, Kisida, and Winters (2015), conducting a study that included three million students found that same-race teachers had a small but positive effect on the academic achievement of same-race students. The researchers concluded, "teachers of the same-race/ethnicity could theoretically narrow the performance gap between students of different races/ethnicities by serving as high-quality, academic role models or because they are more inclined to hold high expectations for a student's potential" (p. 51). These findings corresponded with the results of a Johns Hopkins University study where researchers Gershenson, Holt, and Papageorge (2016) reported White teachers were 40%

more likely to have lower academic expectations for African American students, males in particular, than were African American teachers.

Another researcher, Dee (2004), examined existing test score data "from Tennessee's Project STAR class-size experiment, which randomly matched students and teachers within participating schools" (p.195) to determine if data supported the notion that actively recruiting and hiring minority teachers would have a positive effect on the academic achievement of same-race students. In analyzing data from the 4-year study, which included over 11,000 students from 79 schools, Dee's findings affirmed and were consistent with similar research on the subject. Given the myriad of research verifying the effects and benefits African American male teachers can have on all students' academic achievement, especially African American students, the needed personnel approach would be to recruit and retain additional African American male teachers, which is the focus of this inquiry.

Statement of the Problem

While the demographic composition of classrooms is changing to reflect the cultural diversity of the communities' urban core (Chung & Miller, 2011; Kennedy, 1991), many of these classrooms are filled with White teachers, whereas African American students predominately represent the urban student population (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Kennedy, 1991). According to the NCES.ed.org website, during the 2015-2016 school year, 80% of all public-school teachers nationwide were White and 64% female. Although a primarily White teaching staff would be considered commonplace in predominantly White suburban schools, they also describe many urban schools where both the school and community are

predominantly African American ("Characteristics of public school teachers," 2018). Moreover, African Americans only account for 7% of all public-school teachers, behind not only White teachers but also Hispanic teachers, who make up 9% of all public-school teachers nationwide ("Characteristics of public school teachers," 2018). These statistics are alarming when considering the findings of Milner IV (2007) and Brown (2012), which stressed the importance of African American male teachers as role models for minority students and the increases in academic achievement for having same-race teachers in classrooms in urban schools.

Studies have produced staggering statistics underlining that the achievement gap continues to widen between African American male students and their white counterparts (Gardner et al., 2014). Similarly, research (Brown, 2012) investigating the advantages of having African American male teachers for same-race students suggested there are benefits to African American male students' academic achievement because of this pairing. However, despite the U.S. Department of Education's 2010 teacher recruitment campaign, which focused on attracting male educators, African American men are still underrepresented, accounting for less than 2% of all U.S. public school teachers (U.S. Department of Education launches national teacher recruitment campaign, 2010). Recruitment efforts aimed at attracting African American male teachers often fall short because of the limited number of African American males who see teaching as a viable career option (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011).

Consequently, many predominately White colleges and universities have begun to recognize and address the racial polarization of K – 12 education, which manifests from an education industry comprised primarily of White teachers while most of the students

are minorities. To combat this phenomenon, many colleges and universities include diversity and cultural competency training in their teacher education programs to prepare their graduates for multicultural environments, such as urban classrooms (Cohn & Mullennix, 2007). If successfully implemented, the training would teach White educators to be cognizant of any biases against or deficit thinking regarding minority students (2007). However, when examined through a critical whiteness lens, many of the theory's advocates criticized the effectiveness of diversity curriculum, alleging a lack of evidence of the theory influencing professional practice (Cohn & Mullennix, 2007; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Sleeter, 2016). Matias and Mackey (2016) discovered some of the new preservice White teachers used the knowledge to understand their students and adapted their teaching styles to optimize their students' learning potential. However, others (Cohn & Mullennix, 2007) viewed the courses as a graduation requirement that needed to be checked off on their program of study. The latter group retained their privilege-influenced values, resulting in excuses instead of higher expectations, and continued a deficit mindset that limits the potential for academic achievement for African-American and other minority students (Sleeter, 2016).

There have been studies (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011; Sleeter, 2016) exploring the underrepresentation of African American male educators; however, there is a significant gap investigating why African American male educators chose to enter the profession or what obstacles they had to overcome to become educators. Little research exists to give voice to this exclusive group or analyze their experiences to identify commonalities or to determine that each experience is unique. More credence must happen for their narratives to address and possibly, reverse this phenomenon.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the causes of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban public schools. Specifically, the focus was investigating the factors that influenced current African American males to enter the profession. Additionally, the inquiry further investigated any barriers that may hinder African American males from becoming educators and finally examined reasons that influence current African American males to remain in the profession. Although research (Brown, 2012; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015) findings have affirmed the benefits of African American male educators in urban settings, essential is more definitive information on how to increase representation. A clear understanding of what factors attract them to or deter them from the profession was warranted to understand this phenomenon.

To gather data for this study, the interviewed were 12-18 African American male educators from six urban school districts from the state of Missouri to document their experiences with becoming an educator. Also interviewed were 12 urban public school principals to document what strategies were implemented to recruit African American males to their districts. Analyzed were their narratives, outlining their individual or collective experiences of becoming educators, further identifying factors contributing to the underrepresentation phenomenon. Findings from this study should influence recruiting practices, resulting in a positive impact on the representation of African American male educators in public urban schools.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What racial and social factors impacted the decision of African American male teachers to become a teacher?
2. How do male African American teachers perceive that their presence in PK-12 school settings can further mitigate negative perceptions of the efficacy and potential of African American students?
3. What do male African American teachers perceive as prevalent barriers to entry into the education profession, and how did they affect African American teachers' consideration of a career in education?
4. How do male African American teachers perceive race impacting African American male teachers' elementary, secondary, and preparation for post-secondary education?
5. Which factors contributed to the decision of African American males to remain in education or consider leaving the profession?
6. How can PK-16 educational leaders inform and implement strategies to bolster future recruitment of African American male educators?

Theoretical Framework

To investigate why the underrepresentation of African-American males exists among teachers in urban settings, the exploration of racial and social factors contributing to the phenomenon must occur. Reviewed were several social critical theories to provide more insight into the factors associated with this trend. The frameworks considered were critical whiteness (Applebaum, 2016), critical race (Brown, Noel, Slate, & Tejeda-Delgado, 2008), social justice (Burke, 2010), and African American male theory (Bush & Bush, 2013). Given the lack of impact increasing levels of diversity in urban

communities has had on the racial composition of the predominately Caucasian field of education (White, 2012) and the explicit racial biases to which it alludes, critical theories provided the necessary theoretical frame for analyzing the underrepresentation of African-American male teachers in urban settings. The following will be a discussion of each of the critical theories, with a funneling down to the conceptual framework used within this investigation.

Critical Whiteness Theory

Critical whiteness theory analyzes the covert ideologies of privilege related to White supremacy (Applebaum, 2016). First conceived in the late 1980s, Whiteness became a framework for analyzing the construct of race in America (Leonardo, 2013). Applebaum (2016) referred to Whiteness as a self-replicating, systemic process that infiltrates all areas of society, perpetually elevating the socio-economic status of Whites and concurrently relegating African-Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities. Refer to by some researchers as the underlying disease from which the symptoms of racism stem (Matias & Mackey, 2016), Whiteness has been characterized as an entitlement or having property rights, to which the social construct of race is critical (Applebaum, 2016; Castro Atwater, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Flintoff, Dowling, & Fitzgerald, 2015; Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-Scott, 2014; Johnson, 2018). This marginalizing or oppressing of others just because of their skin color is the cornerstone of White supremacy and the foundation of racism. Although Whiteness emphasizes skin color and race, Johnson (2018) discounted this belief referring to race as a partial fabrication of reality that has "no significance beyond the system of privilege and oppression in which they are created" (p. 17).

Critical whiteness theory relies heavily on the concept of White privilege. "White privilege refers to the myriad of social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 87). Such privileges could include hiring preferences, promotions, raises, and access to resources unavailable to non-Whites. Johnson (2018) characterized these forms of privilege as "unearned entitlements" (p. 21). Illustrated when White individuals exude authority over minorities just because of their race. For example, in one instance, a White resident of an affluent neighborhood would not allow an African-American woman and her child, who also lived in the community, to enter the neighborhood swimming pool and called the police on her because she refused to show him proof of residence (Perez, 2018). Referred to as conferred dominance, White privilege is expressed as an extreme position of authority under the cultural notion of White supremacy (Johnson, 2018).

Critical whiteness theory also examines the White identity and the normalizing of the White culture. What is considered normal and acceptable in society, regarding behavior, language, or tradition, is determined by the culture of the majority (Johnson, 2018); thus, deemed the standard in America is Whiteness. Whiteness refers to a clandestine but commonly adhered to set of social norms (Frankenberg, 1993) heralded as insignificant except to those rewarded by them (Applebaum, 2016). Normalcy is merely another avenue by which Whiteness excludes, marginalizes, and oppresses non-Whites (Frankenberg, 1993).

Critical whiteness theory can explain many inequities in the field of education. According to demographic statistics for all public-school teachers in the United States ("Characteristics of public school teachers," 2018), the teaching profession is nearly

devoid of African-American male teachers. According to researchers, one reason for this is the dominance and normalization of the White culture and values, which have permeated many urban schools in America (Castro Atwater, 2008; Hayes, Juarez, & Escoffery-Runnels, 2014; Jackson, 2014; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014). Graham and Erwin (2011) faulted the normalized white culture, which guided the policies, pedagogy, and class expectations, for the insensitivity, the unfamiliarity, or the unwillingness to recognize cultural differences.

The normalcy aspect of critical whiteness theory has hurt the education of African-American males and other minorities. Leonardo (2009) suggested that the normalcy of White supremacy has become so commonplace, it is dismissed as benign, but critical whiteness theorists believe just the opposite as it relates to education. The whitewashing of curricula, especially in courses such as history and English, "perpetuate[s] white racial supremacy through color-blindness, historical justifications, and sleights of mind" (p. 79).

Besides systemic biases, implicit biases are also factors for cultural discords between Caucasian teachers and African-American students (Cook et al., 2018). "At the core of these cultural conflicts are definitions and expectations of what it means to behave in an acceptable or normal way" (Milner, 2012, p. 702), which leads to increases in discipline for African-American students. In other words, unfamiliarity with behavioral expectations and cultural norms often leads to a continuous cycle of teacher frustration, student behavioral issues, and discipline. Higher discipline rates often result in either in-school suspensions (ISS) or out-of-school suspensions (OSS), both removing students from class and depriving them of valuable instructional time (Cook et

al., 2018). The fact that African-American students receive a disproportionate amount of discipline, which removes them from class, allowing them to fall farther behind, often resulting in dropping out or falling victim to a myriad of consequences (Cook et al., 2018; Graham & Erwin, 2011; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014). This removes the education profession from the realm of possible career choices (Cook et al., 2018) for the African American male.

For African-American male students who manage to overcome the obstacles imposed by a dominant White culture in high school, Whiteness in post-secondary education presents a new set of challenges. One of the first challenges African-American males will face because of whiteness biases is legacy admissions policies in post-secondary settings. "Many public and private universities around the country employ legacy admissions preferences to give children of alumni special consideration in the admissions process" (Ladewski, 2009, p. 577). However, since legacy admission stems from alumni who attended universities when discrimination practices in access were open practice, it resulted in legacy biases based on White privilege (Lamb, 1993) and limited African-Americans access since many are first-generation college students.

Another challenge that Whiteness poses for African-American male college students is the dominating presence of White culture on college campuses. Gusa (2010) referred to college campuses as hostile due to the underlying marginalization and discrimination imposed by the normative White culture. At the root of hostility is implicit racism in the form of microaggressions (Ellis, Powell, Demetriou, Huerta-Bapat, & Panter, 2018). "Microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group" (Sue,

Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007, p. 88). Though regularly posed as compliments, such exchanges reference stereotypes and are intended to insult marginalized groups (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggression frequently results in African-American males feeling excluded or out of place (Ellis et al., 2018). Without a feeling of connectedness to the institution, many of these students become discouraged and drop out, which leads to an attrition rate of greater than 65% among African-American male college students (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004).

Whiteness and the normalization of White culture in educational environments have had detrimental impacts on African-American males (Gusa, 2010). The discriminatory practices associated with Whiteness (Ellis et al., 2018) have fostered the marginalization of African-American males through the construction of systemic racism barriers to impede their success. Such efforts, demonstrated through the disproportionate issuance of disciplinary consequences, increase the dropout or pushed out (Allen, 2017) rate for African-American males, eliminating possible future educators. Though critical whiteness theory (Applebaum, 2016) revealed many inequities and marginalizing practices associated with White privilege and the normalcy of Whiteness, the focus of this theory was considered too narrow to frame this investigation of the underrepresentation of African-American male educators in urban settings.

Critical Race Theory

Emerging in the 1970s due to the growing apathy of the post-civil rights era to address increases in occurrences of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Lynn, 2002) was critical race theory. This theory explored issues through a lens of civil rights and the historical accounts of minorities' encounters with racism in America (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2012; Lynn, 2002; Valdes, McCristal Culp, & Harris, 2002). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) characterized critical race theory as a movement comprised of a "collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p .3). Researchers imply that the critical race theory provides the frame through which analyzed practices identify inequities based on race. Critical race theory also encompassed other forms of oppression related to minorities due to the commonality between different forms of marginalization (Lynn, 2002). Critical race theory opposed the notion of racial supremacy and condemned oppression in the pursuit of justice and equity ("Critical race as a methodology", 2015).

A fundamental belief of critical race theory is accepting that race and racism are conventional concepts in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Lynn, 2002; Schwandt, 2007; Valdes et al., 2002). Scholars commonly agree that race is a social construct and used to justify inequitable resource allocation (Applebaum, 2016; Castro Atwater, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Flintoff et al., 2015; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Johnson, 2018). Although race can be an unbiased descriptor, when the context of a dominant race is applied, it becomes racism and the basis for oppression, marginalization, and injustice (Yosso & Solorzano, 2008). Racism can be defined as "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (Lorde, 1992, p. 496), but Marable (1992) took a more uncompromising tone, defining racism as "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress…people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color" (p. 5).

Critical race theory is also in opposition to the notion of color blindness. Derived from the 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, which established the principle

of separate but equal and supported the post-civil war South's Jim Crow legislation (Przybyszewski, 2007), was color blindness. In his dissent for this case, Justice Harlan stated, "Our constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law" ("Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896)," 2018). Thus, defined as the "belief that one should treat all persons equally, without regard to their race" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p.158), color blindness seeks to marginalize the construct of race through the notion that a person's race is irrelevant (Castro Atwater, 2008). However, Casto-Atwater argued that supporters of color blindness overlook racism in their misperception of the concepts "race should not matter" and "race does not matter" (p. 246). Likewise, Fergus (2017) asserted that advocates of color blindness justify racism by blaming the oppressed for their circumstances and not the systemic inequity of discrimination. In contrast, advocates for color blindness refer to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's appeal for the character, not color, to be the measure of the man, as support for the concept (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Leonardo, 2013). Scholars maintained, "Those who embrace color blindness do so with good intentions" (Fergus, 2017, p. 35) but disapprove of the lack of context that race provides those of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Fergus, 2017; Leonardo, 2013).

Critical race theory draws attention to the racism and discrimination that African-American males and other minorities experience in urban secondary educational environments (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In a profession dominated by White females, many of whom would argue their race has no bearing on teaching minorities (Matias & Mackey, 2016). Therefore, White teachers in urban schools attempt to remove race as a limiting factor when interacting with African-American male students; however, in

searching for alternative descriptions for their interactions, they perpetuate the racism and discrimination they attempt to avoid (Miller & Harris, 2018). As Fergus (2017) noted, "translating color-blindness into curriculum also can telegraph messages to children that the cultural experience of being white and the middle class is the desired standard" (p. 32). Consequently, when African-American males fail to conform to or oppose the normalized White culture, educators label them defiant or learning disabled and assign them to special education classes (Allen, 2017; Banks, 2017). Allen's (2017) research identified White teachers are unfamiliar with minority cultures and create mistaken impressions of African-American male students' behavior, erroneously applying racially stereotyped, "normalizing judgments of Black male…deviancy" (p. 274). Allen further suggested that the inconsistent behavior results in the discipline at such disproportionate levels "that students who get caught in the cycle of disciplinary practices start to give up on school and simply wait to get formally pushed out of the system" (p. 278). Likewise, Banks (2017) implied that White teachers' inability to relate culturally with African-American male students impacts their ability to present subject matter relevantly. This inability has resulted in a "contrived obstacle to accessing the general education curriculum, which then reinforced the notion that students who could not learn through the primary method of instruction were disabled" (p.102). Feeling penalized by the special education label, many African-American males disengage in school (Banks, 2017), which increases the dropout rate.

Critical race researchers (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) also recognize the impact of racism and discrimination on African-American male college students. As mentioned earlier, microaggressions, which contribute to predominately white institutions' negative

culture, are the covert forms of this marginalizing practice (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Such white-dominated cultures subject African American males to overt racism to discourage them or diminish their efforts. Solorzano et al. (2000) noted instances of professors ignoring minority students and accusing minorities of cheating because they outperformed the White professors' perceptions of the academic incapability of minorities. The same study also revealed overt racism and low expectations of minorities from White students, who assumed African American males were admitted solely based on athletic prowess since they could not earn academic scholarships. Solorzano et al. (2000) similarly identified that Whites ascribe affirmative action as the reason for minority admission to college.

The racism and discrimination that African American males face on many college campuses discourage minorities and make them feel unwelcomed (Ellis et al., 2018). These students fall victim to anxiety and negativity, leading to low completion rates among African-American males (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014) and identifying another barrier for potential African-American male educators. Critical race theory's focus is broader than that of critical whiteness theory, and it goes a step further and not only identifies systemic racism and discrimination but investigates the effects these practices have on marginalized groups. However, like critical whiteness theory, critical race theory does not consider factors other than race, eliminating it as a possible theory for framing this study.

Social Justice Theory

A third theory considered as a frame for this study would be social justice theory. Researchers have failed to settle on a standard definition of social justice and subjectively

classify phenomena under this framework (Van den Bos, 2003). However, most scholars do agree that the definition for the theory refers to the distribution of power, equity, and fairness (Burke, 2010; Hage, Ring, & Lantz, 2011; Khalifa & Briscoe, 2015; Merchant & Shoho, 2006; Rawls, 1973; Van den Bos, 2003; Williamson, Rhodes, & Dunson, 2007). Rawls (1973) emphasized just as individuals should indiscriminately have "the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others" (p. 213), the opportunities for impairments are equally as indiscriminate for all. Still, Khalifa and Briscoe (2015) further clarified by implying equity refers to the random distribution of benefits throughout a population and stressing that equality may not necessarily be equitable.

Social justice, which champions the notion that all men are "leveled regarding the rights given with their humanity (Burke, 2010, p. 101)", is a term that has evolved over the years. Luigi Taparelli, a Jesuit philosopher and early pioneer of social justice, wrote about the principle in 1843 about the political unification of the Italian peninsula (Burke, 2010). In formulating his principle, Taparelli wrote, "The right to govern has been obtained through the "natural superiority" of the ruler, and the ruling class: through their superior courage, knowledge, and wealth…. Whoever brings order [peace and justice] into society has the right to rule it" (Burke, 2010, p. 100). In this statement, Taparelli appears to support a ruling class whose superiority is a manifestation of dominant character traits and access to resources. However, Burke (2010) further suggested that individual qualities present in one individual might not be present in the same proportions as another; the fact that each is human necessitates justice and equality between them. Thrift and Sugarman (2018) echoed this sentiment, referring to humanity between

individuals as the harmony achieved by state actions to ensure equality in economics, education, and protection under the law. The concept of justice was later "introduced as a new virtue by Pope Pius XI in his 1931 encyclical, "Quadragesimo Anno" (Marlin, 2016, para. 7), because it modeled and employed family-like activities to enhance the good in society, the Pope called justice "social" (Marlin, 2016, para. 7). Rawls (1973) suggested that individuals should have an equal right to fundamental liberties compatible with those experienced by others, just as social inequities should be to everyone's advantage.

Social justice researchers (Losen, 2011) investigating racism in education recognize the disparity in discipline between African-American males and their White counterparts. According to McCarthy and Hoge's (1987) research, African-American males are more likely to receive disciplinary consequences. The excessive suspension rate deprives marginalized groups of classroom instruction, results in a lack of motivation, and reduces student achievement (Haight, Kayama, & Gibson, 2016; Losen, 2011). Except for severe infractions, research suggested that suspensions are unnecessary and ineffective in deterring or correcting negative or undesired behaviors (Haight et al., 2016; Losen, 2011; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987). As it relates to social justice, the discipline construct in urban schools is merely a marginalization tool used to restrict access to academic resources by minorities, especially African-American males (McCarthy & Hoge, 1987). The repercussions are a reduction in academic achievement and an increased risk of dropouts (Losen, 2011).

Advocates for social justice (Losen, 2011) also found inequity in alternative schools, used to house suspended or expelled students, with an overrepresented population of African-American males (Dunbar, 1999). Dunbar's research stated that the

purpose of alternative schools is to provide students with a consequence for their actions while still providing students with an education. Supporters of alternative schools embrace the marginalizing philosophy of "removing the bad apples so they will not contaminate the whole batch" (p. 242). Dunbar argued further that while the intentions for alternative schools are noble, students exit these facilities undereducated and ill-equipped for anything but manual labor (Dunbar, 1999).

At the post-secondary level, social justice scholars highlight the fact that many African-American male students graduate from low-performing urban schools academically unprepared for college (Allen, 2017). Similarly, Davis and Palmer (2010) established that due to low-performing urban schools, once admitted to college, and many African-American male students are required to take remedial classes to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college. This lack of college readiness is often due to underperforming, predominately African-American, urban schools suffering from large class sizes, inadequate curriculum, underqualified teachers, and the lack of funding for education (Tajalli & Opheim, 2004).

Similarly, social justice theory focuses on any factor that discriminates against society members and calls for justice and equality for marginalized groups (Khalifa & Briscoe, 2015). Critical whiteness (Leonardo, 2013) and critical race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) theories all draw from the major tenets of social justice theory (Losen, 2011) but are not as inclusive as social justice theory. However, given that social justice theory is so inclusive, the theory may be too broad to provide an adequate framework for an in-depth analysis of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban settings. Furthermore, the factors leading to this phenomenon may be economic or

social and completely unrelated to race or discrimination, which eliminates social justice theory (Losen, 2011) as a framework for this theory.

African American Male Theory

A relatively new theory to consider as the conceptual framework for exploring the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban settings is African American Male theory (Bush & Bush, 2013). African American male theory is a contemporary model for exploring African American males' lives in a predominantly White society and how their experiences influenced their interpretation and interactions within that society (Enyia, Watkins, & Williams, 2016). Co-authored by Bush and Bush, the theory "was first published in the *Journal of African American Males in Education"* in 2013 (Bush & Bush, 2018, p. 1). This theory alleges that there is no all-inclusive theory to frame studies about African American males, is intended to "analyze phenomena, experiences, and outcomes that are pathological, deleterious, oppressive, and arresting in the lives of African American boys and men" (Bush & Bush, 2013, p. 12). This theory draws heavily from Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory, which suggested that "the environment of the child is a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next" (Guy-Evans, 2020, para. 4). Other theories sourced were resilience and stability theories (Holling, 1973), social justice theory (Hage et al., 2011; Rawls, 1973), and several of the critical theories to develop a framework for examining the relationship between African American males and the dominant White culture of America (Bush & Bush, 2013)

Bush and Bush (2013) listed six tenets of African American male theory. The first is "the individual and collective experiences, behaviors, outcomes, events,

phenomena, and trajectory of African American boys and men's lives are best analyzed using an ecological systems approach" (p. 7). Providing the foundation for the first tenet was Bronfenbrenner's (1977) research on environmental systems. His premise stated that the study of human behavior cannot be limited to the observed behavior of several individuals at a specific place and time but must include an examination of interactions in "environment[s] beyond the immediate situation containing the subject" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). Hence, the first tenet highlights the interdependent, interrelated, and interactive connections between the individual and the environment, framing their view of reality (Bush & Bush, 2013).

In the second tenet identified, "there is something unique about being male and of African descent" (Bush & Bush, 2013, p. 10); the authors suggest the lived experiences of African American males is incomparable to other ethnic groups. Consequently, a universal approach is not recommended for programs targeting African American males. Instead, Bush and Bush (2013) recommend dissimilarities be taken into consideration if the programs are to be relevant and meet the needs of the individual.

The third tenet denoted, "there are a continuity and continuation of African culture, consciousness, and biology that influences the experiences of African American boys and men" (p. 10). Bush and Bush (2013) discussed heritage and culture, implying that any research on African American males that do not consider it would be flawed and incomplete. The researchers also asserted, "African American boys and men are resilient and resistant" (p. 10), highlighting that their ability to persist (Holling, 1973) and endure hardships of discrimination while simultaneously resisting the dominant White culture from which it originates is strong. In the next tenet of African American male theory, it

is argued, "Race and racism coupled with classism and sexism have a profound impact on every aspect of the lives of African American boys and men" (p. 11). Finally, Bush and Bush (2013) noted, "the focus and purpose of study and programs concerning African American boys and men should be the pursuit of social justice" (p. 12). Bush and Bush (2013) further acknowledged that African American males are continually contending with racism. Thus, racism and the discriminatory practices of organizations endorsing it should be exposed and corrected.

Though it is a recent theory, it draws on aspects of well-researched theories as a foundation for its claims (Bush & Bush, 2013). African American male theory aligned to critical race theory (Ellis et al., 2018) but focused primarily on African American males. Like critical race theory, supporters of this African American male theory would oppose the normalcy of White supremacy and the resulting discrimination to seek justice for African American males.

As it relates to education, Bush and Bush (2013) inferred that African American males are characterized as discounting education when what is opposed is the institution that promotes the normalcy of White supremacy. This resistance to the dominant culture can be viewed as defiance. It may be manifested as disruptive behavior in African American male students, which could account for an increase in discipline for African American male students and the resulting drop or pushout rates (Daneshzadeh & Sirrakos, 2018; Enyia et al., 2016; Mcintosh Allen, Davis, Garraway, & Burt, 2018). Advocates for this theory concluded that continually having to contend with racism within an educational setting could negatively impact the academic achievement of African American males (Partelow, Spong, Brown, & Johnson, 2017). Furthermore, it

also adversely affects the number of African American males wanting to become educators or willing to endure higher education's discriminatory environment long enough to become certificated (Solorzano et al., 2000).

Closely related to critical Whiteness (Applebaum, 2016) and critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), African-American male theory focuses on marginalizing practices and their effects as it relates to the lives of African-American males. Despite the novelty of African American male theory (Bush & Bush, 2013) and the lack of scholarly investigation, its tenets relate directly to the subjects of this current inquiry and provide a uniquely specific conceptual framework to research this phenomenon.

Design of the Study

Methodology

Since the lived experiences of individuals will be the primary focus for investigating the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban settings, used will be a qualitative research design (Creswell, 2014). This study will use a transformative worldview approach to understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014), using predetermined questions but allowing for follow-up or clarifying questions, will be the primary source of data collection. This will be a critical research study, designed not as a call for action but to call attention to covert, social structures that benefit some while marginalizing or oppressing others (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Setting of the Study

The setting for the study will be six urban school districts in the state of Missouri.

Since the largest metropolitan areas are located on the east and west sides of the state, three districts will be chosen from each location. Large public school districts will be among the districts selected for this study due to their size and the demographics of their populations. According to Education Week's website, currently, there are 2,427 schools in Missouri, and 19.2% of them are inner-city schools ("Missouri - Education Week," 2020). Chosen was the state of Missouri because of its centralized location in the Midwest. It has several large urban school districts throughout the state, which provides a larger population of African American male educators for the study. Likewise, given its centralized location, the findings from the study are more likely to be transferable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Furthermore, the larger urban districts match the stereotypical classifications of an urban school district, where a combination of the African American and Hispanic populations is greater than 50% of the community's total population. The student population for Missouri is 73.7% White, 16.6% African American, 5.2% Hispanic, and 4.5% mixed and other races, with the concentration of minority students in urban schools ("Missouri - Education Week," 2020). Over forty-eight percent of all students in Missouri receive free or reduced lunches, with percentages being much greater in urban areas. Likewise, the graduation rate is considerably lower in urban districts ("Missouri - Education Week," 2020).

Participants

Given that the subject of the study is African American male educators, a purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013) was initially conducted to select participants relative to the study. The initial solicitation for study participants yielded

few participants, and one of the gatekeeper permission requests was denied, which greatly limited the prospect for participants from those areas. Consequently, the strategy of snowballing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2013), where referrals for potential participants are obtained from a current participant, was employed. As a result, the participants for this study were 12-18 current African American male certified staff educators employed by urban school districts as teachers or counselors and 12 African American administrators. The racial classification of African American were individuals who identified ethnically and or categorized as non-Hispanic Black or African American. Due to the limited presence of African American male educators in the profession, drawn from throughout the state to reach the level of sufficiency was the sample (Seidman, 2013) as Creswell (2014) recommended for a phenomenological study. Furthermore, the researcher will "explore his or her own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 27).

Data Collection

Before initiating the data collection process, the researcher submitted an application to the institutional review board (IRB) for the University of Missouri (see Appendix A) and had the research plan reviewed and accepted (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013). Carefully planned, the procedures for the study were outlined to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Given the study's sensitive nature, participants could face scrutiny or disciplinary action if their identity and comments were divulged. Next, letters were sent to the superintendents or others who may be deemed "gatekeepers" (p. 96) (see Appendix B) to gain access to district employees and permission for the use of time and

resources that the study may impact. Participants were sought once permission had been granted, and those meeting the criteria were interviewed. Finally, participants (see Appendix C) signed informed consent forms "containing a standard set of elements that acknowledges protection of their human rights" (Creswell, 2014, p. 96).

Interview Protocol

The primary source of data collection for this study was through interviewing participants. However, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "real-world" data collection is an amalgam of conversations, interviews, and observations (p. 137). As recommended by Creswell (2014), an interview protocol of sixteen questions for teachers and two additional questions for administrators (Appendix D) were used by one researcher to ensure consistency. One interview protocol was designed for the teachers, while the other with some modifications focused on input from the administrators. The interview was "semi-structured" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 110) to allow for clarifying and follow-up questions. Besides introductory questions, participants were asked three predetermined, open-ended interview questions specific to each research question category. Likewise, follow-up questions were related to the responses given for each predetermined interview question. Validity of the interview data was obtained by comparing participant data from several districts on each side of the state. Cross-checking data from multiple points is referred to as triangulation (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2013). Another method used to check validity was member checking (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), where participants were allowed to review the findings and provide clarifying comments where necessary.

Due to time and travel constraints resulting from targeted districts being on

opposite sides of the state and the pandemic of COVID 19, interviews were conducted using an online application that allowed virtual face-to-face interviews. Individual video and auto recordings of the virtual interviews were made in addition to the researcher taking handwritten notes to record key phrases, logging non-verbal responses, and noting topics to ask follow-up questions about when the opportunity arises (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Seidman, 2013). Immediately after the interviews, the audiotapes were transcribed and reviewed to reflect on what the participant said. The transcript was sent to the participants for "member checking" before data analysis. The recordings and the interview transcripts were stored securely to ensure the participants' anonymity and retain the information for future reference.

Document Analysis

Data collection for this study included researching the school districts from which participants were drawn and gathering any information pertinent to the study (Appendix E). The primary sources for this data were the districts' website and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website. Additionally, any artifacts provided by the district or the participants were reviewed for relevance and incorporated when appropriate. Examples of such documents include but are not limited to recruitment plans and diversity documents.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the recordings, the transcripts were analyzed for information pertinent to the research questions. Notations were made in the margin within vivo terms or "terms based in the actual language of the participant" (Creswell, 2014, p. 198). This process is referred to as coding the data (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016;

Seidman, 2013). Similar codes were then combined into themes, a process Merriam and Tisdell (2016) refer to as axial coding. The authors also recommend combining the themes into categories based on the frequency a concept arises. These categories are what readers may determine to be important, unique, or queries not considered prior (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, the categories were converted into narratives and vignettes used to tell the story of the participant's experience and how they interpreted it. The researcher used questioning techniques during the interview to refine and verify the interpretation of the participants' responses. However, as noted prior, as a means of member checking (Cho & Trent, 2006; Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013), the narratives and vignettes were forwarded to participants for their review. Ensuring that the participants' lived experiences are captured and appropriately articulated is crucial to obtaining credible and transferable findings.

Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

In examining the cause of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban settings, as with any study, several significant limitations (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013) must be disclosed as they may have a bearing on the research methodology or the perspective from which the findings are presented. First, there was a potential for bias based on the race and gender of the researcher. This study's principal researcher is an African American male who attended urban secondary schools in the Midwest. The researcher is from a lower-class family and is the first member of his family to graduate from college and the only person in the family to earn advanced degrees. The researcher has experienced microaggressions, blatant racism, and discrimination in secondary and post-secondary educational settings. Although the

researcher is currently an educator, it was not his initial choice for a career. While the researcher's lived experiences could provide pertinent data for the study (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013), the researcher's perspective may result in inadvertent bias, but the awareness of such bias is noted.

Because this phenomenon's impact is significant enough to warrant an investigation, objectivity and credibility are paramount to the research. Unintentionally introducing subjectivity at any point in the research process would diminish the findings and dilute the participants' lived experiences. Though efforts to suppress the researcher's biases can be made, it is doubtful that they can be eliminated. Instead, as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the researcher will acknowledge his biases "and make clear how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data" (p. 16). In a process defined as reflexivity (Creswell, 2014), the researcher included an autobiographical narrative to discuss any biases that may potentially influence the data collection or analysis processes.

A second limitation of the study was the limited number of subjects available to participate in the study. Given that African American males make up less than 2% of public school teachers nationwide, locating enough willing participants for the study to be relevant and the findings transferable may impact the effectiveness of any decisions made based on the study's findings. According to Education Week's website, there are 67,356 public school teachers in Missouri and 2,427 public schools in the state ("Missouri - Education Week," 2020). Theoretically, there are approximately 1,347 African American male teachers in the state or less than two per building. This could result in limited access to data and time constraint issues for the study. To control for this

limitation, participants were sought from six urban school districts, three from each side of the state. Increasing the search provided a better opportunity to obtain enough willing participants for the study.

A third limitation of the study was the source of the data compiled for the research. The data would be based on the lived experiences of the interviewed participants; however, it would focus primarily on the experiences after the participant decides to become an educator and persevere despite any opposition. These data sets gathered would be instrumental in revealing many of the barriers encountered and perhaps highlight any systemic racism or discrimination that may have contributed to the underrepresentation of African-American male educators in urban public schools. However, the data may fail to explain why some African American males were unsuccessful in their pursuit to become an educator or why others did not even consider education as a viable career path.

Finally, this study was limited in scope and will not provide a complete narrative explaining the underrepresentation of African American males in public urban schools. Given the scarcity of participants for the study, the lived experiences specific to each individual are not intended to be generalizable to the entire population of African American males (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013). A more extensive national study would find commonality in the experiences and for greater transferability.

Definition of Key Terms

Defined for the study are several key terms that will help in the understanding of this investigation.

African American**:** The racial classification of African American will be defined

as individuals who are ethnically identified and or categorized as non-Hispanic Black of African descent.

African American Male Theory: A novel "multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary" (Bush & Bush, 2013, p.6) theory that incorporates elements of social justice, resilience, stability, and ecological systems theory to provide a framework for examining the unique experiences that shape the trajectory of African American males. Aimed at identifying oppressive policies and programs, openly challenging and denouncing inequity, and ultimately dismantling the system that perpetuates it, this theory fills the void of a framework unique to the African American male (2013). The theory has six tenets, which include:

1. "The individual and collective experiences, behaviors, outcomes, events, phenomena, and trajectory of African American boys and men's lives are best analyzed using an ecological systems approach" (p. 7). This tenet maintains that African American males are interconnected with their environment (2013).
2. "There is something unique about being male and of African descent" (p. 10). The theory seeks to study and understand the uniqueness of this population (2013).
3. "There is a continuity and continuation of African culture, consciousness, and biology that influence the experiences of African American boys and men" (p. 10). African American Male theory recognizes the enduring cultural link between Africa and African American males and the lack of research examining the phenomenon.

4. "African American boys and men are resilient and resistant" (p. 10). African American male theory draws upon resilience and resistant theories to denote the propensity of African American males to resist inequality and endure adversity (2013).
5. "Race and racism, coupled with classism and sexism, have a profound impact on every aspect of the lives of African American boys and men" (p. 11). With this tenet, the theory seeks to investigate how the constant of racism affects the lives of African American males. The tenet also aims at examining the privilege of being male amidst the oppression of a predominately White society (2013).
6. "The focus and purpose of study and programs that concern African American boys and men should be the pursuit of social justice" (p. 11). This theory's sixth tenet is a call for action to identify and eradicate oppressive programs and systems ((Bush & Bush, 2013).

***Educator*:** Certified instructors, counselors, or administrators whose primary responsibility is to foster the academic achievement of students.

***Urban public schools*:** Metropolitan schools with combined populations of African American and Hispanic students exceeding 60%. Likewise, since urban is generally associated with populations of individuals with lower socio-economic statuses, the definition of public urban schools will also include free or reduced lunch rates that exceed 60%.

Significance of the Study

Since the historic 1954 *Brown vs. The Board of Education* ruling, education

legislation has focused on improving academic achievement for African Americans and other minorities. Such legislation has included The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), and *The Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). Each bit of legislation has failed to provide a data-proven approach to reach its goals. As research (Goldhaber et al., 2019) has shown, increasing the presence of African American male educators in urban schools has been proven to increase the academic achievement of same-race minority students (Gershenson et al., 2018; Goldhaber et al., 2019; Kalam Id-Din II, 2017). However, whether their experiences are unique or collective, there are significant factors deterring African American males from entering the profession.

Many urban school districts, similar to those chosen as the setting for this study, are predominately African American, have large populations of students receiving free or reduced lunches, and have low graduation rates. Such districts could benefit most from the advantages of increasing African American male educators' representation (*School-based strategies for narrowing the achievement gap*, 2017). Researching these factors could give insight into educational, training, recruitment, and marginalizing practices resulting in the minimal presence of this demographic in education. Studying this phenomenon could lead to a greater understanding of how to reverse the trend and enhance the diversity of the teaching profession.

Summary

Education is a career field that is predominately White and female. Even in urban settings, where most students are African American, this staffing trend is still prevalent (Douglas et al., 2008). Although studies have shown that having African American male

teachers for same-race students increases their academic achievement, grossly underrepresented in urban classrooms are African American males (*U.S. Department of Education launches national teacher recruitment campaign*, 2010). Furthermore, recruitment efforts to increase the presence of African American males in education have been unsuccessful. With there being both a pronounced need and desire to have more African American males in the classroom, the reasons for their limited presence require investigation to reverse the trend. Though examining the impact that racism, discrimination, and other marginalizing efforts may have had in deterring African American males (Bush & Bush, 2013) from becoming educators will enable researchers to understand what to do regarding their underrepresentation. Based on the narratives of those who chose to become teachers and their interpretation of their unique or collective experiences, these findings will be necessary for identifying and removing barriers.

SECTION TWO

SETTING FOR THE STUDY

Introduction

A clear understanding of the study's setting was crucial to establishing context for the research and interpreting the findings. For this study, the settings were six urban public school districts, three on each the East and the West sides of Missouri. In analyzing any organization, the most thorough way is to examine the establishment from multiple perspectives to obtain a comprehensive assessment of the operation and then analyze the effectiveness and impact of its leadership. Bolman and Deal (2013) recommended a systematic approach to examine organizations; thus, the four frames model guided the analysis of the urban school districts. Likewise, social justice leadership theory will provide direction for analyzing the leadership for the school districts.

Background of the Organization

Though the earliest predecessor to today's high school was the Harvard college preparatory school opened in Boston in 1635, institutions resembling modern high schools were not established in America until 1821 (Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2003). Moreover, public schools were not prevalent in America until after a "Michigan State Supreme Court ruled in 1874 that taxes could be levied to support public high schools as well as elementary schools (Boyer, 1983). According to a report entitled *The Evolution of American High Schools* (n.d.), the public school system began to take shape when the Committee of Ten, commissioned by the National Education Association, established guidelines for schools, including grade levels and core classes.

The business industry also played a role in the establishment of public schools. Combining his vision for education and monetary support, Industry leader Andrew

Carnegie worked with the Committee of Ten to establish the Carnegie unit (Silva et al., 2015). The committee concluded that students would have to attend a class five times per week to earn a unit or a credit, requiring "some 120 hours of instruction over a school year" (Silva et al., 2015, p. 8). At that time, only 14 credits were needed for graduation (Silva et al., 2015).

The purpose of modern high schools is to provide students with the knowledge and skills to be contributing members of society who are college or career-ready; however, its purpose has not always been as multifaceted (Silva et al., 2015). Intending to increase productivity, industry leaders during the late 19th and early 20th centuries sought to shape education, not for the betterment of society or the individual, but to create better-skilled, docile, well-trained factory workers (Defalco, 2016). Many of the ill-conceived notions that influenced education still exist in school disciplinary policies and mission statements that focus on producing college or career-ready graduates (Silva et al., 2015).

Whereas White students had the choice of whether to attend school or not during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the same was not true for African Americans. In fact, until the emancipation of slaves, "White southerners, who once valued educated laborers' efficiency and production, grew to oppose literacy for the enslaved workers for fear it would deem them unfit for slavery and inspire revolt" (Danns & Purdy, 2015, p. 573). During that era, severe punishment and even death were consequences if a slave attempted or demonstrated they knew how to read. With newfound freedoms after the Civil War, African Americans developed an unquenched thirst for knowledge, knowing that it "was inextricably tied to their freedom" (Danns & Purdy, 2015, p. 575). With help

from missions and other organizations, African American communities established schools for educating their youth, separated from Whites (Danns & Purdy, 2015). In later years, African American schools received state funding, but schools remained segregated until the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. the Board of Education*.

Organizational Analysis

Due to their complexity, analyzing an organization can be challenging. Frequently, processes vital to the operation go unevaluated because they become routine (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Bolman and Deal (2013) developed the four frames model to organize the organization analysis to account for the possibility of this oversight. Using the structural, political, human resources, and symbolic frames (Bolman & Deal, p.14) as an examination tool, it is designed to isolate and analyze the interactions within and between the organization's most significant factions. This model will be used to conduct the organization analysis for the urban school districts chosen as settings for this study.

The Structural Frame

Bolman and Deal's (2013) structural frame focuses on the operations aspect of the organization. With the principle assumption that the organization's success is in its workforce's best interest, this assumption maintains that all policies and procedures should support its goals (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Moreover, the structural frame proposes "organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures" (Bolman & Deal, p. 45). Here, the authors agree with Levi's (2017) assertion that personal agendas may be incompatible with the organization's goals (Levi, 2017, p. 52), leading to inefficiency and detriment to the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The structural frame is a practical analysis tool with an organization reliant

upon focused efforts, process controls, efficiency, and an established hierarchy (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

For urban public schools, the structural frame is the optimum tool for examining effective and ineffective processes (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Staffed primarily by White female educators and predominately attended by minority students (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Kennedy, 1991), the educators' goals and the organization often clash. Like all K-12 educational organizations, urban public schools exist to produce well-educated students prepared for post-secondary environments. Though teachers and administrators are tasked with providing the necessary instruction to meet this goal, many of these educators are not focused on the organization's goals (Bolman & Deal, 2013) but on their salaries, student loan forgiveness, and pensions (Milanowski et al., 2009). This disconnect manifests itself in microaggressions towards the students and underperforming schools (Gusa, 2010; *School-Based Strategies for Narrowing the Achievement Gap*, 2017)

The Human Resources Frame

Unlike Bolman and Deal's (2013) structural frame, which focuses primarily on the organization's needs, the human resources frame concentrates more on the interplay between the workforce's needs, the organization's needs for skilled labor, and the symbiotic relationship that benefits them both. For urban public schools, the structural frame is the optimum tool for examining effective and ineffective processes. Staffed primarily by White female educators and predominately attended by minority students (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008; Kennedy, 1991), the educators' goals and the organization often clash. Like all K-12 educational

organizations, urban public schools exist to produce well-educated students prepared for post-secondary environments. Though teachers and administrators are tasked with providing the necessary instruction to meet this goal, many of these educators are not focused on the organization's goals but their salaries, student loan forgiveness, and their pensions (Milanowski et al., 2009). This disconnect manifests itself in microaggressions towards the students and underperforming schools (Gusa, 2010; *School-Based Strategies for Narrowing the Achievement Gap*, 2017)

The Human Resources Frame

Unlike Bolman and Deal's (2013) structural frame, which focuses primarily on the organization's needs, the human resources frame concentrates more on the interplay between the workforce's needs, the organization's needs for skilled labor, and the symbiotic relationship that benefits them both. One of the theories the authors (Bolman & Deal, 2013) draw from for this frame is Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Asserting that money is not the ultimate motivator, Bolman and Deal (2013) inferred that other things individuals value just as much or perhaps more; such as "doing good work, getting better at what they do, bonding with other people, and finding meaning and purpose" (p. 120). Similarly, the authors referred to Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y to support the Human resources frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Theory X shows the pessimistic view of management, assuming a lack of effort and motivation from staff. At the same time, Theory Y leans towards the symbiotic relationship by claiming that management would profit most by placing staff was meeting the organization's goals will all staff to meet their own (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

In viewing urban school districts through the human resources frame (Bolman &

Deal, 2013), it is evident that the relationship between students and staff is paramount. Research supported the notion that high expectations combined with positive relationships are essential to teaching and learning (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Milner IV., 2016; *School-Based Strategies for Narrowing the Achievement Gap*, 2017). Conversely, in many urban schools, a Theory X approach is prevalent as students fall victim to White normalcy and deficit thinking as barriers to academic achievement (Allen, 2017; Castro Atwater, 2008; Gardner et al., 2014; *School-Based Strategies for Narrowing the Achievement Gap*, 2017). With urban school district leaders seeing the value in developing positive student relationships, many districts have turned to cultural sensitivity or humility training to prevent the microaggressions and deficit perspectives detrimental to student success (Enyia et al., 2016; Rivera-Mccutchen, 2004).

The Political Frame

Closely related to the structural frame, Bolman and Deal's (2013) political frame examines the power and conflict associated with coalitions within organizations competing for scarce resources. In viewing urban school districts through the human resources frame, it is evident that the relationship between students and staff is paramount. Research supports the notion that high expectations combined with positive relationships are essential to teaching and learning (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Milner IV., 2016; *School-Based Strategies for Narrowing the Achievement Gap*, 2017). Conversely, in many urban schools, a Theory X approach is prevalent as students fall victim to White normalcy and deficit thinking as barriers to academic achievement (Allen, 2017; Castro Atwater, 2008; Gardner et al., 2014; *School-Based Strategies for Narrowing the Achievement Gap*, 2017).

The Political Frame

Closely related to the structural frame, Bolman and Deal's (2013) political frame examines the power and conflict associated with coalitions within organizations competing for scarce resources. Analyzing an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013) through the political frame can reveal actual and perceived leaders and their power to influence decision-makers. According to Levi (2017), opposing coalitions can have two types of power: personal or soft and harsh. "Personal or soft power derives from an individual's characteristics or personality and may include expert, referent, and information power. Positional or harsh power is based on an individual's formal position in an organization" (Levi, 2017, p. 158). Leaders use these powers to support their interests and further their agendas.

Through the political frame, urban school districts are in constant conflict due to the scarcity of resources. Grossly underfunded due to the community's low socio-economic status (Kenyon, 2007), district leaders often struggle with allocating scarce resources to fund programs that most benefit students. Given the local funding shortfalls, researchers question "whether state aid is sufficiently targeted to high-poverty districts to compensate for the inequitable pattern of local government resources" (Kenyon, 2007, p. 49). With no consistent method for state governments to distribute funding to low-income schools, very few districts receive adequate funding to meet the needs of students (Kenyon, 2007)

The Symbolic Frame

The fourth frame in Bolman and Deal's (2013) model is the symbolic frame. This frame investigates the intangible aspects that have intrinsic or sentimental value to the

organization. Symbols and traditions are often incorporated into the mission and vision of an organization. They can communicate the organization's values, motivate staff, or provide direction in decision-making (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Symbols can also add to an organization's climate and culture, acting as "the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise to accomplish desired ends (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Symbolism plays a vital role in urban public schools (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The school colors, the mascot, and the school's name contribute to the school's culture. For many minority students, participating in graduation is just as important as completing 12 years of education. Meaning more than just graduation, for some, walking across the stage symbolizes crossing over into adulthood (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Likewise, with few points of pride in the community, the local high school sport's team's success can unite the community (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Urban Public School Districts

Six public school districts, three from the state's two largest metropolitan areas, were selected for this study. According to The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), a metropolitan area is defined as a "standardized county or equivalent-based areas having at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core, as measured by commuting ties" (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2018). The school districts were selected based on the predetermined definition of urban as districts having combined African American and Hispanic student populations exceeding 60% of total enrollment in low socio-economic communities. Descriptive data for these districts was derived from

the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) website (DESE.mo.gov).

District 1

The first district selected for the study is located in a large city in Missouri. Although the city's population is only 300,576, the metropolitan area is home to over 2.8 million. The median household income for the city is $43,896, while the poverty rate is 20.4%. The district first opened in 1838 and is known for opening the first kindergarten in North America in 1873 and the first African American high school west of the Mississippi in 1875 (Missouri Historical Society Archives, n.d.). With 68 schools, of which 15 are high schools, the district has a total enrollment of 19,222 students, of which 78.5% are African American, 5.7% are Hispanic, and 12.9% are White. The dropout rate is highest for African Americans at 7.5%, followed by Hispanics at 4.6%, and White at 3.6, but the dropout rates for all three categories are more than double the state percentages. The free or reduced-cost lunch rate for the district is 100%.

District 2

The second district is near a large city in Missouri and part of its greater metropolitan area. U.S. census data lists the city's population as 20,525, with a median household income of $40,000 and a poverty rate of 23.3%. The school district opened its first school in 1878 and now has 23 schools, of which 4 are high schools. DESE lists the districts' enrollment as 9,473, with 83% African Americans, 3.6% Hispanics, and 8.1% Whites. The district's dropout rate for African American students is .4% lower than the state and is listed as 3.0%, while the dropout rate for Hispanic students is 6.8% and 2.3% for Whites. As with District 1, 100% of the district's enrollment qualifies for free or

reduced-cost lunch.

District 3

District 3 is also near a large Missouri city and part of its greater metropolitan area. According to the U.S. census, the city's population is 34,165, but it boasts a median household income of $61,274 with a poverty rate of only 16.7%. Opening its first school in 1915, the city also had one of the nation's first junior high schools. The city's school district currently has five elementary, one junior high, and one high school. The district's total enrollment is 2,508 students, with 79.1% African Americans, 4.6% Hispanics, and 11.2% Whites. Though the district's 5% dropout rate for African Americans is well above the state's average, it is 1.6% lower than the dropout rate for Whites. However, the dropout rate for Hispanic students was not reported on the state's website due to the state suppressing percentages for totals of less than five students. Though the median household income is above $60,000, the district's free or reduced-cost lunch rate is 100%.

District 4

The fourth district selected for the study is in a large city with a population of 495,327; however, the greater metropolitan area's population is 2.15 million. Moreover, the median household income is $54,194, with a poverty rate of 16.1%. The district's first school opened in 1867; now, the district has 33 schools, of which 7 are high schools. The district has a total enrollment of 14,069 students, of which 54% are African Americans, 28.4 % are Hispanic, and 9.7% are White. The dropout rate for African Americans is 6.4%, 5.8% for Hispanics, and 5.5% for Whites. 100% of the students qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches.

District 5

The fifth Missouri district chosen for this study is a large city with demographics matching district 4's. Founded in 1902, the district has ten schools, one of which is a high school. The district's total enrollment is 5,099 students, with 69.1% African American, 13.3% Hispanic, and 9.2% White. The district's dropout rate for African Americans is 2.2% and well below the state's average of 3.4%. The dropout rate for Hispanics is 3.1% and 9.8% for Whites. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced-cost lunches is 100%.

District 6

District 6 also shares population and demographic information with Districts 4 and 5. Started as a one-room common school in the late 1800s, District 6, as it stands today, was founded in 1956. Currently, the district has five elementary, one junior high, and one high school. With a total enrollment of 2,522 students, the district is 60.7% African American, 9.8% Hispanic, and 19% White. The total dropout percentage for the district is 3.1%, with 2.8% being African American.

Leadership Analysis

An organization can either benefit from effective leadership or suffer from it if it is poor (Levi, 2017). Northouse (2016) associated leadership with power or "the ability to influence others towards a common goal" (p.6). Bolman and Deal (2013) also aligned leadership with power and influence but only referred to its potential to influence change and motivate others to act. Because of the racism and discrimination that plague most urban public schools, leaders in these districts cannot limit their involvement to influencing others to change; they, themselves, must become the agents of change

(Bolman & Deal, 2013). Consequently, the most effective theory to analyze leadership in urban public school districts is social justice leadership (Theoharis, 2008).

Social Justice Leadership

Just as advocates for social justice are unable to offer a standard definition of its theory (Van den Bos, 2003), social justice leadership is just as nebulous (Furman, 2012). But supporters of the theory agreed that social justice leadership examines the lived experiences of minorities oppressed by the systematic racism of White normalcy and seeks to eliminate discriminatory practices limiting equal access to educational resources and academic achievement (Furman, 2012). Rivera-Mccutchen (2004) and Furman (2012) postulated that social justice leadership compels leaders to demolish marginalizing systems that sustain educational inequity in schools. Theoharis (2007, 2008) further added that equity in educational opportunities and resources for marginalized groups should guide the actions of social justice leaders.

One of social justice leadership tenets is that it has to be action-oriented and transformative (Furman, 2012; Rivera-Mccutchen, 2004; Theoharis, 2008). As stated, social justice leaders cannot rely on delegating their advocacy to others. These leaders need to be proactive and take a stance to eliminate inequity in their schools. This requires leaders to conduct a thorough review of their policies and a continuous evaluation of their practice to ensure equity for their students (Furman, 2012; Rivera-Mccutchen, 2004).

The second tenet of social justice leadership stresses this leadership is committed and persistent (Furman, 2012). Given the longevity of systematic racism and discrimination, efforts to reverse the resulting marginalization will have to be substantial and sustained. To describe the intensity needed to combat this injustice, Furman (2012)

demanded leaders be “deeply committed …[and]… stubbornly persistent” (p. 196). Leaders also need to be relentless in identifying and condemning the microaggressions and deficit perspectives that covertly diminish the self-esteem of African American males and other minorities, hindering their academic achievement (Ellis et al., 2018; Hotchkins, 2016; Solorzano et al., 2000).

Similarly, social justice leadership is inclusive and democratic (Furman, 2012). Disruption of oppressive White normalcy cannot be accomplished solely by the actions of social justice advocates (Theoharis, 2008). Change will require a concerted effort for equality between the oppressed and the oppressor and open and honest dialog to purge ignorance in support of social justice. Similarly, Ryan (2006) affirmed that inclusion would depend on “the way that relationships are envisioned among members of institutions, in the roles that are prescribed for individuals and groups, and in the ends to which leadership activities are directed” (p. 9). Conversations of this nature are unsettling and often avoided, but as stated, social justice leaders must be committed and persistent to the process (Theoharis, 2008).

To be successful, social justice leadership must be relational and caring (Furman, 2012). Participants develop high levels of trust among them and assume goodwill throughout the process. Furthermore, all actions must be what is best for the student. Building relationships in a safe environment fosters buy-in from all participants and passion for equity work (Theoharis, 2008).

Social justice leaders must also be reflective (Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2008), evaluating their actions and motives to identify bias and recognize their growth in the process. Furman (2012) stated that “self-reflection is seen as a way for leaders to identify

and come to grips with their prejudices and assumptions arising from their cultural backgrounds" (p. 197). Social justice leaders must also be oriented towards a social justice pedagogy (Theoharis, 2008). In their reflection and evaluation, these leaders must ensure that all students have equal access to educational resources in an environment free of marginalizing processes.

Implications for Research

The underrepresentation of African American males in urban public schools is a phenomenon worthy of investigation. Representing less than 2% of the public school teachers nationwide (US Department of Education launches national teacher recruitment campaign, 2010), a larger population of teachers is needed to generate enough participants for the study. Thus, six urban school districts from large metropolitan areas will provide the best opportunity to obtain participants. Centrally located in the United States, urban school districts in Missouri offer a maximum possibility to acquire qualitative data for transferable findings.

With urban public schools being the focus of the scholarly inquiry, selecting participants from such settings will add to the data's validity. Moreover, with research supporting the notion that students, especially African American males, benefit from having an African American male teacher (Dee, 2004; Egalite et al., 2015; Gershenson et al., 2018; Goldhaber et al., 2019; Villegas & Irvine, 2010), data from participants at these locations can be categorized in search of commonality in their lived experiences.

Summary

To give relevance to the qualitative data obtained from participants in the study, an analysis of the organization. Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames model provided a

multi-perspective analysis through the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic frames. Using this approach allowed for processes that may go unrecognized out of routine (Bolman & Deal, 2013) and provided a comprehensive view of the organization. Likewise, social justice leadership theory (Theoharis, 2008) provided the framework for analyzing the leadership in the districts selected for the study. Viewing the district's leadership through a critical social lens will provide insight into how leaders in urban public school districts develop policies and allocate resources to ensure equity in their schools.

SECTION THREE

SCHOLARLY REVIEW

Though the population of urban classrooms is shifting to mirror the diversity of America (Chung & Miller, 2011), many of these classrooms are predominately African American and male, while the majority of the teachers are Caucasian (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008). Education is a career field comprised mostly of Caucasian teachers and, more specifically, Caucasian female teachers. During the 2015 - 2016 school year, 80% of all public-school teachers nationwide were Caucasian, and 64% were female (NCES.ed.org website). Though the teacher ethnicity statistics would be understandable for predominantly White suburban schools, they also describe the teacher population for many urban schools, where the school and community are predominantly African-American.

Moreover, African-Americans only account for 7% of all public-school teachers, behind not only Caucasian teachers but also Hispanic teachers, who make up 9% of all public-school teachers nationwide ("Characteristics of public school teachers," 2018). This fact is disheartening given that studies by researchers like Milner (2006) and Brown (2012) stressed the importance of African-American male teachers serving as role models and the potential for increases in academic achievement for having the same-race teachers in classrooms in urban settings. With many school improvement initiatives aimed at filling the achievement gap between Caucasian and minority students, a significant problem of practice exists, seeking to answer, why are African-Americans males underrepresented among educators in urban school settings?

This scholarly review will analyze theoretical frameworks to investigate and identify barriers and factors limiting or deterring African-American males from pursuing a career in education. Moreover, the academic analysis will examine potential limitations

imposed on African-American male secondary and post-secondary students and summarize existing research related to identifying barriers for African American males.

Theoretical Frameworks

To investigate why an underrepresentation of African American males exists among teachers in urban settings, exploring racial and social factors contributing to the phenomenon must occur. Reviewed were several social critical theories to provide more insight into the factors associated with this trend. The frameworks considered were critical whiteness (Applebaum, 2016), critical race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), social justice (Burke, 2010) theories, and African American male theory (Bush & Bush, 2013). The increased diversity in urban communities has had little impact on public urban school teaching staff (White, 2012). and the explicit racial biases to which it alludes, critical race theories provided the necessary conceptual frame for analyzing the underrepresentation of African-American male teachers in urban settings.

Critical Whiteness Theory

Critical whiteness theory analyzes the covert ideologies of privilege related to White supremacy (Applebaum, 2016). First conceived in the late 1980s, whiteness became a framework for analyzing the construct of race in America (Leonardo, 2013). Applebaum (2016) referred to Whiteness as a self-replicating, systemic process that infiltrates all areas of society, perpetually elevating Whites' socio-economic statuses and concurrently relegating African Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities. Whiteness has been characterized as an entitlement or having property rights, to which the social construct of race is critical (Applebaum, 2016; Castro-Atwater, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Flintoff, Dowling, & Fitzgerald, 2015; Johnson-Bailey, Ray, & Lasker-

Scott, 2014; Johnson, 2018). This marginalizing or oppressing of others just because of their skin color is the cornerstone of White supremacy and the foundation of racism. Although whiteness emphasizes skin color and race, Johnson (2018) discounted this belief. He referred to race as a partial fabrication of reality that has “no significance beyond the system of privilege and oppression in which they are created” (p. 17).

Critical whiteness theory relies heavily on the concept of White privilege (Applebaum, 2016). “White privilege refers to the myriad of social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 87). Such privileges could include hiring preferences, promotions, raises, and access to resources that non-Whites could not access. Johnson (2018) characterized these forms of privilege as “unearned entitlements” (p. 21). Another example of White privilege is when White individuals exude authority over minorities just because of their race. Referred to as conferred dominance, White privilege is expressed as an extreme position of authority under the cultural notion of White dominance (Johnson, 2018).

Critical whiteness theory also analyzes the White identity and the normalizing of the White culture. What is considered normal and acceptable in society, regarding behavior, language, or tradition, is determined by the culture of the majority (Johnson, 2018); thus, deemed the standard in America is Whiteness. Whiteness refers to a clandestine but commonly adhered to set of social norms (Frankenberg, 1993) heralded as insignificant except to those rewarded by them (Applebaum, 2016). Normalcy is merely another avenue by which whiteness excludes, marginalizes, and oppresses non-Whites (Frankenberg, 1993).

Critical whiteness theory explained many inequities in the field of education (Applebaum, 2016). According to demographic statistics for all public-school teachers in the United States ("Characteristics of public school teachers," 2018), the teaching profession is nearly devoid of African-American male teachers. According to researchers, one reason for this fact is the dominance and normalization of the White culture and values, which have permeated many urban schools in America (Castro-Atwater, 2008; Hayes, Juarez, & Escoffery-Runnels, 2014; Jackson, 2014; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014). Graham and Erwin (2011) faulted the normalized White culture guiding educational policy for being insensitive to, unfamiliar with, or unwilling to recognize cultural differences.

The normalcy aspect of critical whiteness theory has hurt the education of African-American males and other minorities. Leonardo (2009) suggested that the normalcy of White supremacy has become so commonplace, it is dismissed as benign, but critical whiteness theorists believe just the opposite as it relates to education. The whitewashing of curriculum, especially in courses such as history and English, "perpetuate[s] white racial supremacy through color-blindness, historical justifications, and sleights of mind" (p. 79).

Besides systemic biases, implicit biases are also factors for cultural discords between Caucasian teachers and African-American students (Cook et al., 2018). "At the core of these cultural conflicts are definitions and expectations of what it means to behave in an acceptable or normal way" (Milner, 2012, p. 702), which leads to increases in discipline for African-American students. In other words, unfamiliarity with the behavioral expectations and cultural norms often leads to a continuous cycle of teacher

frustration, student behavioral issues, and discipline. Higher discipline rates often result in either in-school suspensions (ISS) or out-of-school suspensions (OSS), both removing students from class and depriving them of valuable instructional time (Cook et al., 2018). The fact that African-American students receive a disproportionate amount of discipline, which removes them from class, allowing them to fall farther behind, often resulting in dropping out or falling victim to a myriad of consequences (Cook et al., 2018; Graham & Erwin, 2011; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014). This results in removing the education profession from the realm of possible career choices (Cook et al., 2018).

For African-American male students who manage to overcome the obstacles imposed by a dominant White culture in high school, Whiteness in post-secondary education presents a new set of challenges (Applebaum, 2016). One of the first challenges African-American males will face is whiteness biases in the form of legacy admissions policies in post-secondary settings. "Many public and private universities around the country employ legacy admissions preferences to give children of alumni special consideration in the admissions process" (Ladewski, 2009, p. 577). However, since legacy admission stems from alumni who attended universities when discrimination in access was open practice, it resulted in legacy biases based on White privilege (Lamb, 1993), limiting African-Americans access since many are first-generation college students.

Another challenge that whiteness poses for African-American male college students is the dominating presence of White culture on college campuses. Gusa (2010) referred to college campuses as hostile due to the underlying marginalization and discrimination imposed by the normative White culture. At the root of hostility is

implicit racism in the form of microaggressions (Ellis, Powell, Demetriou, Huerta-Bapat, & Panter, 2018). "Microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group" (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007, p. 88). Such exchanges, regularly posed as complements, reference stereotypes that insult marginalized groups (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggression frequently results in African-American males feeling excluded or out of place (Ellis et al., 2018). Without a feeling of connectedness to the institution, many of these students become discouraged and drop out, which leads to an attrition rate of greater than 65% among African-American male college students (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Lotkowski, Robbins, & Noeth, 2004).

Whiteness and the normalization of White culture in educational environments have detrimentally impacted the academic achievement of African-American males (Applebaum, 2016). The discriminatory practices associated with whiteness have fostered the marginalization of African-American males through the construction of systemic racism barriers to impede their success. Such efforts, demonstrated through the disproportionate issuance of disciplinary consequences, increase the dropout or pushed out (Allen, 2017) rate for African-American males, eliminating possible future educators. Though critical whiteness theory (Applebaum, 2016) revealed many of the marginalizing practices associated with White privilege and the normalcy of White culture in America, this theory's focus is too narrow to frame this investigation of the underrepresentation of African Americans male educators in urban public school.

Critical Race Theory

Emerging in the 1970s as the result of the growing apathy of the post-civil rights

era of the 1960s as a way to address increases in covert and overt occurrences of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Lynn, 2002; Tate, William F., 1997), critical race theory explored issues through a lens of civil rights and the historical accounts of minorities' encounters with racism in America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Lynn, 2002; Valdes, McCristal Culp, & Harris, 2002). Delgado and Stefancic (2012) characterized critical race theory as a movement comprised of a "collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (p .3). The researchers imply that the critical race theory provides the frame through which analyzed practices identify inequities based on race. Critical race theory also encompassed other forms of oppression related to minorities due to commonality between different forms of marginalization (Lynn, 2002). Critical race theory opposes the notion of racial supremacy and condemns oppression in the pursuit of justice and equity ("Critical race as a methodology," 2015).

A fundamental belief of critical race theory is that race and racism are conventional concepts in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Lynn, 2002; Schwandt, 2007; Valdes et al., 2002). Scholars commonly agree that race is a social construct used to justify inequitable resource allocation (Applebaum, 2016; Castro-Atwater, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Flintoff et al., 2015; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Johnson, 2018). Although race can be an unbiased descriptor, when the context of a dominant race is applied, it becomes racism and the basis for oppression, marginalization, and injustice (Yosso & Solorzano, 2008). Racism can be defined as "the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance" (Lorde, 1992, p. 496), but Marables (1992) took a more aggressive tone, defining racism as "a system

of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress…people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color" (p. 5).

Critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) is also in opposition to the notion of color blindness. Derived from the 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessy vs. Ferguson,* which established the principle of separate but equal and supported the post-civil war South's Jim Crow legislation (Przybyszewski, 2007), was color blindness. In his dissent for this case, Justice Harlan stated, “Our constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law” (“Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896),” 2018). Thus, defined as the “belief that one should treat all persons equally, without regard to their race” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p.158), color blindness seeks to marginalize the construct of race through the notion that a person’s race is irrelevant (Castro-Atwater, 2008). However, Casto-Atwater argued that supporters of color blindness overlook racism in their misperception of the concepts “race should not matter” and “race does not matter” (p. 246). Likewise, Fergus (2017) asserted that advocates of color blindness justify racism by blaming the oppressed for their circumstances and not the systemic inequity of discrimination. In contrast, advocates of color blindness refer to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s appeal for the character, not color, to be the measure of the man, as support for the concept (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Leonardo, 2013). Scholars maintain, “Those who embrace color blindness do so with good intentions” (Fergus, 2017, p. 35) but disapprove of the lack of context that race provides those of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Fergus, 2017; Leonardo, 2013).

Critical race theory draws attention to the racism and discrimination that

minorities, specifically African-American males, experience in urban secondary educational environments (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Many White teachers in urban schools attempt to remove race as a limiting factor when interacting with African-American male students; however, in searching for alternative characterizations of their interactions, they perpetuate the racism and discrimination they attempt to avoid (Miller & Harris, 2018). As Fergus (2017) noted, “translating colorblindness into curriculum also can telegraph messages to children that the cultural experience of being white and the middle class is the desired standard” (p. 32). Consequently, when African-American males fail to conform to or oppose the normalized White culture, they are labeled as defiant or learning disabled and assigned to special education classes (Allen, 2017; Banks, 2017). Allen's (2017) research identified White teachers are unfamiliar with minority cultures and form mistaken impressions of African-American male students’ behavior, erroneously applying racially stereotyped, “normalizing judgments of Black male…deviancy” (p. 274). Allen further suggested that the inconsistent behavior results in the discipline at such disproportionate levels “that students who get caught in the cycle of disciplinary practices start to give up on school and simply wait to get formally pushed out of the system” (p. 278). Likewise, Banks (2017) implied White teachers’ inability to relate culturally with African-American male students impacts their ability to present subject matter relevantly. The result is a “contrived obstacle to accessing the general education curriculum, which then reinforced the notion that students who could not learn through the primary method of instruction were disabled” (p.102). Feeling penalized by the special education label, many African-American males disengage in school (Banks, 2017), eventually increasing the dropout rate.

Critical race researchers also recognize the impact of racism and discrimination on African-American male college students. Microaggression, which contributes to predominately white institutions' negative culture, is a covert form of this marginalizing practice (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Such White-dominated cultures subject African-American males to overt racism to discourage them or diminish their efforts. Solorzano et al. (2000) noted instances of professors ignoring minority students and accusing minorities of cheating because they outperformed the White professors' perceptions of the academic incapability of minorities. The same study also revealed overt racism and low expectations of minorities from White students, who assume African-American males were admitted solely on athletic prowess since they could not receive academic scholarships. Solorzano et al. (2000) also assert that Whites charge affirmative action for minority admission to college.

The racism and discrimination that African-American males face on many college campuses are often useful in discouraging minorities and making them feel unwelcomed (Ellis et al., 2018). These students fall victim to anxiety and negativity, leading to low completion rates among African-American males (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014) and constructing another barrier for potential African-American male educators. Critical race theory's focus is broader than that of critical whiteness theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), and it goes a step further and not only identifies systemic racism and discrimination but investigates the effects these practices have on marginalized groups. However, like critical whiteness theory, critical race theory does not consider factors other than race, eliminating it as a possible theory for framing this study.

Social Justice Theory

A third theory to consider as a conceptual framework for this study would be social justice theory (Burke, 2010). Researchers have failed to settle on a standard definition of social justice and subjectively classify phenomena under this framework (Van den Bos, 2003). However, most scholars agree that the definition for the theory refers to the distribution of power, equity, and fairness (Burke, 2010; Hage, Ring, & Lantz, 2011; Khalifa & Briscoe, 2015; Merchant & Shoho, 2006; Rawls, 1973; Van den Bos, 2003; Williamson, Rhodes, & Dunson, 2007). Rawls (1973) stressed that just as individuals should have "the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others" (p. 213), the opportunities for impairments are equally as indiscriminate for all. Still, Khalifa and Briscoe (2015) further clarified by implying equity refers to the random distribution of benefits throughout a population and stressing that equality may not necessarily be equitable.

Social justice, which champions the notion that all men are "leveled regarding the rights given with their humanity (Burke, 2010, p. 101)", is a term that has evolved over the years. Luigi Taparelli, a Jesuit philosopher and early pioneer of social justice, wrote about the principle in 1843 about the political unification of the Italian peninsula (Burke, 2010). In formulating his principle, Taparelli wrote, "The right to govern has been obtained through the "natural superiority" of the ruler, and the ruling class: through their superior courage, knowledge, and wealth…. Whoever brings order [peace and justice] into society has the right to rule it" (Burke, 2010, p. 100). In this statement, Taparelli appears to support a ruling class whose superiority manifests dominant character traits and access to resources. However, Burke (2010) suggested that individual qualities

present in one individual might not be present in the same proportions as another; each is human necessitates justice and equality between them. Thrift and Sugarman (2018) echoed this sentiment, referring to humanity between individuals as the harmony achieved by state actions to ensure equality in economics, education, and protection under the law. The concept of justice was later "introduced as a new virtue by Pope Pius XI in his 1931 encyclical, Quadragesimo Anno" (Marlin, 2016, para. 7). Because it modeled and employed family-like activities to enhance the good in society, the Pope called this justice "social" (Marlin, 2016, para. 7). Rawls (1973) suggested that individuals should have an equal right to fundamental liberties compatible with those experienced by others, just as social inequities should be to everyone's advantage.

Social justice researchers (Losen, 2011) investigating racism in education recognize the disparity in discipline between African-American males and their White counterparts. According to McCarthy and Hoge's (1987) research, African-American males are more likely to receive disciplinary consequences. The excessive suspension rate deprives marginalized groups of classroom instruction and results in a lack of motivation and a reduction in student achievement (Haight, Kayama, & Gibson, 2016; Losen, 2011). Except for extreme infractions, research suggests that suspensions are unnecessary and ineffective in deterring or correcting negative or undesired behaviors (Haight et al., 2016; Losen, 2011; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987). As it relates to social justice, the discipline construct in urban schools is merely a marginalization tool used to restrict access to academic resources by minorities, especially African-American males. The repercussions are a reduction in academic achievement and an increased risk of dropouts (Losen, 2011).

Advocates for social justice also find inequity in alternative schools, used to house suspended or expelled students, which hosts an overrepresented population of African-American males (Dunbar, 1999). Dunbar's research stated that alternative schools' purpose is to provide students with consequences for their actions while still providing students with an education. Supporters of alternative schools embrace the marginalizing philosophy of "removing the bad apples so they will not contaminate the whole batch" (p. 242). Dunbar argued further that while the intentions for alternative schools are noble, students exit these facilities undereducated and ill-equipped for anything but manual labor (Dunbar, 1999).

Social justice scholars highlight that many African-American male students graduate from low-performing urban schools academically ill-prepared for college (Allen, 2017). Similarly, Davis and Palmer (2010) found that due to poor-performing urban schools, once African-American male students are admitted to college, many must take remedial classes to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college. This lack of college readiness is often due to underperforming, predominately African-American, urban schools suffering from large class sizes, inadequate curriculum, underqualified teachers, and the lack of funding for education (Tajalli & Opheim, 2004).

Social justice theory (Burke, 2010) focuses on any factor that discriminates against society members and calls for justice and equality for marginalized groups. While this theory explores the causes of inequity and oppression, it does little to investigate the effects the "societal oppression and trauma" (Karcher, 2017, p. 124) has on the marginalized victims (2017). The theory also identifies adversity (Cook et al., 2018) due to racism, but it does not reflect on the perseverance of the oppressed. For

these reasons, social justice theory (Burke, 2010) is not an ideal framework for studying the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools.

African American Male Theory

Another theory to consider for exploring the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools is African American Male theory (Bush & Bush, 2013). In an attempt to construct a comprehensive theory specifically designed to investigate the lives of African American males (Enyia et al., 2016), Bush and Bush (2013) first introduced their theory in the *Journal of African American Males in Education* in 2013. African American male theory alleges that there are no all-inclusive theories to frame studies about African American males. The theory intends to not only acknowledge the racial disparities experienced by African Americans in a predominately White society but “investigate, expose, and correct those practices, policies, programs, systems, concepts, and institutions that perpetuate its continuation from a social justice perspective” (Enyia et al., 2016, p. 74). This theory draws from Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) model of interconnected environmental systems (Bush & Bush, 2013, p. 89), resilience and stability theories (Holling, 1973), social justice theory (Hage et al., 2011; Rawls, 1973), and several of the critical theories to develop a framework for examining the relationship between African American males and the dominant White culture of America (Bush & Bush, 2013)

Bush and Bush (2013) listed six tenets of African American male theory of which the first is “The individual and collective experiences, behaviors, outcomes, events, phenomena, and trajectory of African American boys and men’s lives are best analyzed using an ecological systems approach” (p. 7). This tenet highlights the interdependent,

interrelated, and interactive connection with their environment and the individuals around them, which frames their view of reality (Bush & Bush, 2013). In the second tenet, "There is something unique about being male and of African descent" (p. 10) and the third tenet, "There are a continuity and continuation of African culture, consciousness, and biology that influences the experiences of African American boys and men" (p. 10). Bush and Bush (2013) discussed heritage and culture, implying that any research on African American males that do not take it into account would be flawed and incomplete. The researchers also asserted, "African American boys and men are resilient and resistant" (p. 10), highlighting their ability to endure hardships of discrimination while simultaneously resisting the dominant White culture from which it originates. In the final two tenets of African American male theory, "Race and racism coupled with classism and sexism have a profound impact on every aspect of the lives of African American boys and men" (p. 11) and "The focus and purpose of study and programs concerning African American boys and men should be the pursuit of social justice" (p. 12), Bush and Bush (2013) acknowledged that African American males are continually contending with racism. They believe that racism and the discriminatory practices of organizations endorsing it should be exposed and corrected.

African American male theory is a contemporary model for exploring the lives of African American males in a dominantly White society. Though it is a recent theory, it draws on aspects of well-researched theories to base its claims (Bush & Bush, 2013). African American male theory is closely related to critical race theory but focuses primarily on African American males. Like critical race theory, supporters of this African American male theory (Bush & Bush, 2013) would oppose the normalcy of

White supremacy and the resulting discrimination to seek justice for African American males.

As it relates to education, Bush and Bush (2013) inferred that African American males are erroneously characterized as discounting education when what is opposed is the institution that promotes the normalcy of White supremacy. This resistance to the dominant culture can be viewed as defiance, and it may be manifested as disruptive behavior in African American male students, which could account for an increase in discipline for African American male students and the resulting drop or pushout rates (Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Lynn, 2006). Advocates for this theory (Bush & Bush, 2013) support the notion that having to contend with racism within an educational setting constantly could adversely affect the academic achievement of African American males and an adverse effect on the number of African American males wanting to become educators or willing to enduring the discriminatory environment of higher education long enough to obtain the credentials necessary to become an educator (Lynn, 2006).

Closely related to critical whiteness and critical race theory, African-American male theory (Bush & Bush, 2013) focuses on marginalizing practices and their effects on the lives of African-American males. Being a new approach, scholars have not thoroughly investigated African American male theory to determine the strengths, weaknesses, or applications for this theory. This inquiry will use African American male theory as the conceptual framework to further a new body of knowledge on African American male educators' experiences.

The Disproportionality of African American Males regarding Discipline

Factors limiting African American males' opportunities to become educators

begin well before they are eligible for certification programs. As Bush and Bush (2013) established in the first tenet of African male theory, “the individual and collective experiences, behaviors, outcomes, events, phenomena, and trajectory of African American boys and men’s lives are best analyzed using an ecological systems approach” (p. 7). In this tenet, the authors stated that the relationships and surroundings that form the foundation for interconnected environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Guy-Evans, 2020) have a profound sociological effect on young African American males. This belief supports the notion that African American males are, indeed, products of their society.

For socio-economic reasons, many African Americans live in large, impoverished, urban areas, which creates a condition known as residential segregation (Downey & Condron, 2016). Though African Americans and other minorities have made economic gains since the civil rights era, “ most minority groups still lag behind non-Hispanic Whites in earnings, wealth, homeownership, and educational attainment” (Fischer, 2003). The congregation of lower-income minorities and White-flight results in a self-replicating residential segregation system (Downey & Condron, 2016; Fergus, 2017; Fischer, 2003; Jackson, 2014; Rivkin, 2017). In these communities, the lack of opportunities, equal access to resources, and the disparities between more and less fortunate intensify the ever-looming falsehood of White supremacy and discrimination (Lynn, 2006).

A consequence of densely populated, low-income urban areas is an increase in crime rates. Researchers Cullen and Levitt (1999) found that “violent crime rates in U.S. cities with populations over 500,000 in 1993, were four times higher than in cities with

populations below 50,000, and seven times greater than in rural areas" (p. 159). In addition to the elevated crime rates, racism and discrimination are equally prevalent and detrimental to these populations. The victims of these unfavorable living conditions are those who are most at risk, African American males and other minority youths.

Enduring low-income, high-crime, hostile environments have had adverse effects on African American males and other minorities. Deemed as trauma, these negative experiences have long-lasting effects, including mental health disorders and hindrance of learning and academic achievement (Bridgeland et al., 2015; Chapman et al., 2017). Students who have experienced trauma may need additional supports and interventions that traditional students may not. If trauma students are not paired with trauma-informed instructors or have classes in trauma-sensitive classrooms, untrained teachers may interpret their poor academic performance or behavioral issues as willful disobedience or obstinance (Chapman et al., 2017; Cook et al., 2018; Terrasi & Crain de Galarce, 2017). Failing to acknowledge these students' needs may result in undue disciplinary action. It is conceivable that in urban schools composed of predominately low-income African American students who have most likely been victims of trauma due to the communities in which they live, African American males are the disproportionate recipients of discipline (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015).

The disproportionate disciplining of African American male students is a well-documented atrocity in America's public school system (Brey et al., 2019). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report, *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018,* during the 2013 – 2014 school year, of the 2.6 million public school students who received one or more days of suspension, those

most suspended were African American males at 17.6%; more than three times that of their White counterparts (5%)(Brey et al., 2019). Moreover, for African American males, suspensions were the consequence for many less severe offenses, such as dress code violations and disrespectful or disruptive conduct or speech (Cook et al., 2018; Lewis et al., 2010). Researchers assert that suspensions, as applied in these circumstances, are a useless draconian form of punishment that is ineffective at correcting the behaviors they are the consequence for (Blomberg, 2003; Haight et al., 2016; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Instead, "suspensions reinforce negative student behavior, increase the likelihood of disengaging from school and dropping out, and effectively" (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015, p. 31).

As disproportionate as the applied discipline against African American male students, such are the consequences. The more days students are out on suspension, the more significant the impact on their academic achievement (Losen, 2011; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Research data has shown that "students who have been suspended are three times more likely to drop out of school by the 10th grade when compared to students who have never been suspended" (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2014, p. 34). As evidenced by this data, students falling behind after being suspended often began to feel discouraged and disconnected from school. The resulting apathy towards education and academic achievement often manifests as increased negative behavior, resulting in additional consequences and suspensions. Defined as pushout, this reoccurring cycle of excessive discipline is one of the most exclusionary practices in public urban schools and the most significant contributing factor to the school-to-prison pipeline (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2014; Bianco et al., 2011;

Rocque & Paternoster, 2011; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). This dilemma is a considerable obstacle for African American males seeking to become educators and a critical limitation for meeting post-secondary eligibility requirements.

For African American males who endured secondary education's hostile educational environment, post-secondary education offers additional discriminatory and race-based challenges. Left socially and emotionally vulnerable from overt forms of racism, discrimination, and "culturally deficit thinking" (Hotchkins, 2016), many African American males arrive at colleges and universities with low self-esteem. Additionally, these students experience culture shock leaving a predominantly African American learning environment for White-dominated post-secondary institutions. As with many minority students, African American males from urban public schools are first-generation college students with little knowledge of assimilating into college life, which adds to this sense of feeling out of place (Ellis et al., 2018). Lacking a sense of belonging often leads to students dropping out (Solorzano et al., 2000) and further reduces the number of African American males eligible for teacher education programs.

Another and perhaps more significant excluding factor for African American male underclassmen are microaggressions. Microaggressions are demeaning, insulting, antagonistic, overtly racist comments used to degrade the identities of marginalized groups (Ellis et al., 2018; Hotchkins, 2016; Solorzano et al., 2000). In the article, *African American Males Navigate Racial Microaggressions*, Hotchkins (2016) discussed how African American males were subjected to deficit perceptions held by White teachers and administrators (p. 2) and the negative impact these actions had on the student's self-image and racial identity. At the post-secondary level, African American males are in an

unfamiliar, predominately White setting and inundated with more racist rhetoric, which negatively affects their academic achievement and obstructs their ability to persist towards graduation (Solorzano et al., 2000).

Conclusion

Researchers (Partelow, Spong, Brown, & Johnson, 2017) acknowledged that before African-American males can enroll in teacher education programs, they must first graduate from high school. However, the process for achieving this goal is flawed and geared towards oppressing the demographic it seeks to attract. Using a whiteness frame, researchers pointed to white privilege and normalization of the White culture as barriers for African-American males seeking careers as educators (Applebaum, 2016). Similarly, critical race advocates view covert and overt racism as limiting factors. African American male theorists (Bush & Bush, 2013) acknowledged the resiliency and resistance of African American males to the normalcy of White supremacy, which may increase student discipline due to opposing the status quo. Moreover, viewing this research through the lens of social justice, scholars acknowledge that restricting access to educational resources hinders African-American male students' academic achievement.

Research (Haight et al., 2016; Losen, 2011; McCarthy & Hoge, 1987) has proven that suspensions and alternative school placement assigned to African-American male students at a disproportionate rate are only useful for academically delaying students and limiting their access to educational resources. African-American males are highly valued as educators, but all of their efforts to pursue a career in education are met with heavy resistance. Before the under-representation of African-American male educators in public urban schools can be reversed, the racism and discrimination that encumbers and

constructs barriers throughout the process must be eliminated.

As the trends revealed in this literature review, African-Americans make up only 7% of all public-school teachers (“Characteristics of public school teachers,” 2018). Connect that fact with the studies by Milner (2006) and Brown (2012), who identified the need for African-American male teachers’ role models for minority students, and the resulting disparities in urban schools are alarming. This problem of practice seeking to answer, “Why are African-Americans males underrepresented among educators in urban school settings?” is essential in addressing these inequities for minority students. With so many school improvement initiatives focused on narrowing the achievement gap between Caucasian and minority students, this significant problem of practice seeks answers.

SECTION FOUR

CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Plan for Dissemination of Practitioner Contribution

Upon successfully defending the Dissertation in Practice, the knowledge gained during the study will be shared with stakeholders and policymakers to be put into practice. Datnow and Park (2014) affirmed that knowledge is only useful if it guides action. Thus, the findings for this study will be shared with the researchers' building administrators, the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, and the district's Board of Education with the intention of influencing decision-making. These entities are responsible for the policies and practices involved in staff recruitment, hiring, and retention. Additional outlets would include presentations at state or national conferences, when and where available.

Within this chapter, the overview of the study is presented, along with the data gathered for each research question. In addition, discussion of the findings, conclusions and implications for practice and scholarship will follow. Lastly, presemted is the executive summary.

Introduction

Public urban schools are comprised primarily of African American and other minority male students, while the vast majority of the teachers are White females (Chung & Miller, 2011; Kennedy, 1991). Though there is a high demand for African American male teachers, not only in urban settings but education as a whole (J. W. Brown & Butty, 1999; Dinkins & Thomas, 2016; Pabon et al., 2011), recruitment efforts have failed to bolster the number of candidates entering the profession.

Nationally, less than 2% of all public school educators are African American males ("US Department of Education Launches National Teacher Recruitment

Campaign," 2010). Studies have proven, the presence of African American male educators in schools has significant impacts on decreasing dropout rates and academic achievement among African American male students (Papageorge et al., 2017), but serving as mentors and role models are additional benefits realized. Consequently, school districts across the country are intensifying efforts to recruit African American male educators; however, the dilemma begins with the lack of candidates entering teacher education programs (Brown & Butty, 1999; Bryan & Williams, 2017; Milanowski et al., 2009; Pabon et al., 2011).

Examining contributing factors for the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools, this study focused on the lived experiences of current African American male educators from two large metropolitan areas in the midwest to provide qualitative data to explicate this phenomenon. The following provides a description of the problem and the purpose of the study, includes answers to the research questions investigated, reviews the findings through the lens of African American Male Theory as the theoretical framework, and discusses the implication of the study

Problem of Practice

While research confirms the benefits of having African American male educators in public urban schools, little progress has been made in reversing the trend or the factors creating them (A. L. Brown, 2012; Goldhaber et al., 2019; Stewart Jr et al., 2014). After decades of focusing on educator diversity, for the vast majority of African American male students, the individual charged with their education and academic achievement does not mirror their race, gender, and often, does not live in the same community as

them (Allen, 2017; Miller & Harris, 2018). In many cases, these students see fewer than two African American male teachers, with the most representation being in non-certified roles, such as custodians and paraprofessionals (Graham & Erwin, 2011).

The prevalent social differences between students and teachers, coupled with a lack of cultural competency, racism, or discrimination, often result in conflicts between behavior and teacher expectations. Losen (2011) and Hotchkins (2016) noted African American male students are disciplined more frequently and with harsher punishments than their White counterparts. These excessive disciplinary practices often lead to negative school experiences, academic achievement deficits, and increased dropout rates (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015; Bridgeland et al., 2006; Partelow et al., 2017; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Such barriers reduce the number of African American male students considering becoming teachers or even seeking post-secondary education.

At the post-secondary level, African American males from urban communities pursuing a degree in education are confronted with White normalcy. From the resulting culture shock, many African American male students are left feeling like they do not belong (Cook et al., 2018; Ellis et al., 2018). The feeling of being disconnected is often a result of or is amplified by microaggressions, overt racism, or discrimination, creating such a negative experience that some students drop out. Other African American male students find themselves ill-prepared for the academic rigor of post-secondary education. Stemming from deficit thinking and low expectations, secondary teachers may reward positive behavior or compliance at the expense of a rigorous curriculum (Davis & Palmer, 2010; Gardner et al., 2014), resulting in the need for post-secondary remediation or academic suspension.

Students completing the teacher education program face additional barriers to becoming educators. Before certification, pre-service teachers must pass state-required content knowledge and pedagogy tests. Critics of standardized testing argue that such tests are biased and exclusionary. Sleeter's (2016) research revealed significant achievement gaps between African American and White pre-service teachers' scores. Goldhaber and Hansen (2010) also recognized a disproportionate fail rate for African American testers but concluded that it was not a result of a biased instrument. The findings from both studies suggest that state-required certification tests are practical tools for identifying highly qualified teachers (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Sleeter, 2016); however, such tests serve as another barrier for African American males to become educators.

Although literature and school districts express a need for African American male educators, the prevalent barriers and exclusionary practices suggest otherwise. What was unknown and required further investigation is why African American males choose to pursue a career in education and what factors contribute to them remaining in the field. Likewise, there was a gap in the research providing qualitative data addressing this phenomenon.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the causes of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban public schools. It investigated the factors that influenced current African American males to enter the profession. Additionally, an investigation of barriers that may hinder African American males from becoming educators was conducted, and finally examined reasons that influence current African American males to remain in the

profession. Although research (Brown, 2012; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015) findings have affirmed the benefits of African American male educators in urban settings, essential is more definitive information on how to increase representation. A clear understanding of what factors attract them to or deter them from the profession was warranted to understand this phenomenon.

For this study, 12 African American male educators were interviewed from six urban school districts in Missouri, and their experiences with becoming an educator were documented. Ten urban public school principals were also interviewed to document their strategies to recruit African American males to their districts. Their narratives were analyzed, outlining their individual or collective experiences of becoming educators, to identify factors contributing to the underrepresentation phenomenon. In conjunction with further research into the phenomenon, findings from this study should be used to influence recruiting practices and positively impact the representation of African American male educators in public urban schools.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What racial and social factors impacted the decision of African American male teachers to become a teacher?

2. How do male African American teachers perceive that their presence in PK-12 school settings can further mitigate negative perceptions of the efficacy and potential of African American students?

3. What do male African American teachers perceive as prevalent barriers to entry into the education profession, and how did they affect African American teachers' consideration of a career in education?
4. How do male African American teachers perceive race impacting African American male teachers' elementary, secondary, and preparation for post-secondary education?
5. Which factors contributed to the decision of African American males to remain in education or consider leaving the profession?
6. How can PK-16 educational leaders inform and implement strategies to bolster future recruitment of African American male educators?

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

The conceptual framework for this study was centered around African American male theory. As a new framework, African American male theory was first proposed by Bush and Bush (2013) and offered "a multi-disciplinary and tans-disciplinary approach to theorizing about the experiences of African American Boys and men" (p. 6). Bush and Bush (2013) contended that despite extensive research, a comprehensive theoretical framework adequately explaining the plight of African American males has yet to be proposed. Though elements of critical race theory are embedded in African American male theory, the authors readily disclose that ecological systems theory ideology is most prevalent in the tenets of this new theory (p. 7).

To compensate for the gap in theories that apply to African American males, Bush and Bush (2013) proposed six tenets for their theory. The first tenet stated, "the individual and collective experiences, behaviors, outcomes, events, phenomena, and

trajectory of African American boys and men’s lives are best analyzed using an ecological system approach” (p. 7). Here, Bush and Bush (2013) suggested African American males have an interdependent relationship with their surroundings and allude to the concept that African American males are a product of their environment. Given the elements of ecological systems theory referenced by the researchers, Bush and Bush would agree that the diversity in environments of African American males can vary by community and socioeconomic status, which adds to the complexity of forming generalizations for all African American males.

In considering the academic environment for African American male students, Goings and Bianco's (2016) study coincided with this tenet of African American male theory. Findings from their study suggested that the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban public schools may result from their limited presence in those settings, resulting in a self-replicating dilemma. Narratives from the qualitative study refer to the limited presence of African American male teachers and the lackluster stigma related to the profession (2016). The researchers concluded, “it is hard to enter a profession where you cannot see your culture, values, and identity represented” (Goings & Bianco, 2016, p. 644).

The second tenet of African American male theory indicated, “there is something unique about being male and of African descent” (Bush & Bush, 2013, p. 10). This tenet focuses on identifying similarities and differences between African American males and how African American males are different from other races (Bush & Bush, 2013). As identified in the literature review, the racial and cultural differences between African American males and White normalcy have resulted in discrimination, overt racism, and

microaggressions. Such marginalizing practices restrict African American male students' academic achievement and reduce the number of potential African American males entering teacher education programs. (Allen, 2017; Ellis et al., 2018; Gusa, 2010).

The theory's third tenet, "there is a continuity and continuation of African vulture, consciousness, and biology that influence the experience of African American boys and men" (Bush V. & Bush, 2013, p. 10), alludes to an enduring cultural and spiritual connection associated with being of African descent. The authors advise of the lack of understanding and deficit thinking, which manifests from ignoring this notion. As revealed in the literature review, in an effort to be impartial, many White educators embrace color blindness. Though the intent may be noble (Fergus, 2017), the attempt to disregard color embraces White normalcy and propagates confrontations due to the lack of cultural competency.

African American male theory's fourth tent focuses on the resilience of African American males, their ability to persevere and overcome adversity, and their resistance to the normalcy of Whiteness (Bush & Bush, 2013). As it relates to this study, the literature highlights the lack of rigor, inadequate curriculum, low expectations (Langham, 2009; Singham, 2003), and disproportionate disciplinary practices (Haight et al., 2016; Losen, 2011) as marginalizing factors limiting the academic achievement of African American males. To counter the deficit ideology that many of them are subjected to, African American male students often cope by projecting the image of a model student, according to White normalized standards, without internalizing the norms or relinquishing their racial or cultural identities (Hemmings, 1996). For many, this ruse is the only successful way to navigate public urban high schools matriculate to a post-secondary educational

institution.

The fifth tenet of Bush and Bush's (2013) theory stated that "race and racism coupled with classism and sexism have a profound impact on every aspect of the lives of African American boys and men" (p. 11). The omnipresence of racism and discrimination referred to by the authors (2013) is often a limiting factor for students leaving urban communities to attend predominately White colleges or universities. Often experiencing racism as microaggressions, African American male students develop a sense of not belonging (Solorzano et al., 2000), potentially leading to dropping out before completing a degree program.

Similar to how the fifth tenet of African American male theory acknowledges how racism and discrimination are everyday factors in the lives of African American boys and men, the sixth tenet of the theory focused on exposing these practices and the institutions that employ them (Bush V. & Bush, 2013). Stating that "the focus and purpose of study and programs concerning African American boys and men should be the pursuit of social justice" (p. 12), this tenet was an indication of the alignment of the theory with the purpose of this study

Methods

A qualitative research design (Creswell, 2014) was used to gather data for this study. Currently employed African American male educators from large urban school districts in Missouri were interviewed to examine the causes for the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools. Used was a transformative worldview approach that focused on the participants' lived experiences, which, through their narratives, qualitative data for the investigation was provided. This approach

allowed the researcher to perceive “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Virtual, semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014) were conducted using a combination of predetermined, follow-up, and clarifying questions to generate the qualitative data for the study and provide insight into the causes of this phenomenon.

Study Setting

The setting for the study was six urban school districts in the state of Missouri. Since the state’s two largest metropolitan areas are located on opposite ends, three districts were chosen from each location. Chosen was the state of Missouri because of its centralized location in the Midwest. The state’s large urban school districts provided a larger population of African American male educators for the study. Furthermore, the districts selected were from areas that matched the stereotypical urban classification, with a combination of the African American and Hispanic populations exceeding 50% of the community’s total population.

The student population for Missouri is 73.7% White, 16.6% African American, 5.2% Hispanic, and 4.5% mixed and other races, with the concentration of minority students in urban schools (“Missouri - Education Week,” 2020). Over 48 percent of all students in Missouri receive free or reduced lunches, with percentages being much greater in urban areas. Likewise, the graduation rate is considerably lower in urban districts (“Missouri - Education Week,” 2020). Provided in Table 1 is the demographic breakdown of the districts used in the study.

Table 1

Metropolitan area and School District Demographics

CATEGORY	MO	Dist. 1	Dist. 2	Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6
Years	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**
Area Population		2.8 mil	2.8 mil	2.8 mil	2.15 mil	2.15 mil	2.15 mil
City Population		300,576	20,525	34,165	495,327	495,327	495,327
Median H/H Income		$43,893	$40,000	$61,274	$54,194	$54,194	$54,194
Poverty Rate %		20.4	23.3	16.7	16.1	16.1	16.1
No. of Schools		68	23	7	33	10	7
Total Enrolled	881,264	19,222	9,473	25	14	5,099	2,522
Black %	15.7	78.5	83	79.1	54	69.1	60.7
Hispanic %	6.7	5.7	3.6	4.6	28.4	13.3	9.8
White %	70.7	12.9	8.1	11.2	9.7	9.2	19
Dropout Rates							
Black %	3.4	7.5	3	5	6.4	2.2	2.8
Hispanic %	1.9	4.6	6.8	*	5.8	3.1	*
White %	0.9	3.6	2.3	6.6	5.5	9.8	*
F/R Lunch %	49.3	100	100	100	100	100	73.4

Participants

Due to the limited presence of African American male educators in the profession, drawn from throughout the state to reach the level of sufficiency was the sample (Seidman, 2013) as recommended by Creswell (2014) for a phenomenological study. Additionally, the sampling strategy, snowballing, was used to obtain sufficient participants for the study. Interviewed for this study were 12 African American male educators currently employed as teachers or counselors in urban school districts and 10 African American administrators from the same districts. As a result of the extensive travel that would have been necessary for in-person interviews and the limitations caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, interviews were conducted virtually for all participants. An interview protocol (Appendix D) was used to ensure consistency (Creswell, 2014) during

the interviews; however, clarifying and follow-up questions were also asked. Video recordings, audio recordings, and transcripts of the interviews were generated through the online application. The interviews were scheduled during times outside of the school day to avoid unnecessary disruption to the educational environment. Illustrated in Table 2 are the participants' positions and years as an educator.

Table 2

Participants' Position and Tenure

Dist. 1		Dist. 2		Dist. 3	
Position	**Tenure**	**Position**	**Tenure**	**Position**	**Tenure**
Dean (HS)	20	Principal (HS)	18	Principal (HS)	16
Principal (MS/HS)	40	IB Sci (HS)	20	Dean (HS)	13
Soc Stud (MS)	21			PE/Health (HS)	17
Math (MS)	11			Science (HS)	16
Dist. 4		**Dist. 5**		**Dist. 6**	
Position	**Tenure**	**Position**	**Tenure**	**Position**	**Tenure**
Principal (HS)	14	Principal (HS)	25	AP /AD (HS)	14
PE/Health (HS)	23	Principal (HS)	35	AP (HS)	17
Counselor (HS)	35	Soc Stud (HS)	30	PLTW (MS)	27
Choir (HS)	5	PE (HS)	18	5th Grade	5

Results and Discussion

Shared in this section are the study's findings, based on interview data, and a discussion regarding the degree to which the applied findings answered the research questions.

Data Analysis

After each interview, the videos and transcripts were reviewed in tandem to ensure the transcription application's accuracy and correct any errors. Interview data were reviewed a second time to redact identifiable information to protect the anonymity of the participant. Also, open coding was conducted to identify potentially important

information for the study. During a final review of the data, axial coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was conducted to refine codes into themes common across the data. The themes identified were: Mentoring: *Coaching, Inspiring, and Encouraging;* Devalued: *Underpaid and unappreciated;* Purpose: *Calling and Commitment.* These themes will be revealed during the presentation of the data and discussed in the study's findings.

Research Questions

Research Question One

The first research question that guided this study was, *What racial and social factors impacted the decision of African American male teachers to become a teacher?* One of the interview questions participants were asked to gather data for this research question was to identify factors that led them to become educators. This question aimed to determine the reason for the career choice and to what extent race or other social factors played a role. Some participants admitted that for them, education was not a calling. One educator stated:

> I tried to talk myself out of becoming an educator. It's not a high-paying job. My fiance's mother was a teacher; she was excited about it, but I tried to talk myself out of it, and it just didn't work.

Similarly, this educator spoke of trying to avoid the profession, saying:

> When I did my undergrad, education was specifically one of the things that I said I did not want to do. So I studied psychology, I studied music composition, and I did a couple of other things in between. Then realized how much I loved teaching and how much I loved working with kids and teenagers. That's when I went back and completed my master's and got certified.

Another participant also stated:

> I didn't always want to be an educator. Originally, I thought that I wanted to be an accountant, and then I came to the realization that it was not the course of action that I needed to take. When I married my first wife and my son started playing sports, that's what really prompted me to get into coaching. I knew that I needed to get into the education field in order to coach, so he inspired me to go back to school to finish up and get my undergrad in teaching.

A 27-year educator teaching Project Lead the Way (PLTW) at the middle school recalled what made him want to be an educator:

> What convinced me to become an educator is a crazy story. I was a senior in college, and I was on my way to a play with a friend of mine who was in education. She was doing her student teaching. She was a student teaching fourth grade. I asked her I was teaching her when she began to tell me all about student teaching and that kind of thing. Then she told me this story about a particular young lady that she had who was a fourth-grader. Her mom was strung out on Crack and would disappear for 7 to 10 days, sometimes a couple of weeks at a time. And the little girl, a fourth-grader, had a little brother, and the only way that she could support them, again this nine or 10-year-old, she basically sold her body to the brothers and stuff. You know, the young men in the neighborhood. So when they needed money, she would basically pimp herself out so she could feed herself and her brother. Man, I don't know. That story just, it just, it got to my heart. And the very next day, and when I say the next day, I'm not kidding. I was in my last semester. And that very next day, I called the education department

> and switched majors. I just thought I would try to do what I could to change that for future kids. I tried to talk myself out of it. You know, it's not a high-paying job.

While some educators resisted the urge to enter the profession, other participants felt as if it was a calling, such as a high school science teacher who stated that he "fell in love with explaining and helping some fellow classmates around seventh grade or so." A physical education teacher said, "I've always wanted to be an educator because I didn't see too many guys that looked like me, Black males." Similarly, a counselor and 35-year educator felt as if he was predestined to teach and indicated:

> I grew up in a family of educators. My father was a teacher, coach, and administrator. Mom was a teacher, as well. I think the only reason I really went into education is because of the fact that I wanted to be able to help other young people to give them the support and the resources that they needed, not only to graduate from high school but to be able to be successful in college.

One principal, with 20 years of experience in education, was not particularly searching to be an educator but became interested in teaching by happenstance. He indicated:

> In high school, there was a class called cadet teaching. And we actually thought by the wording, my friends and I didn't read the course description; we thought it had something to do with law enforcement. We just thought it would be cool, and we were going to be riding around with police officers for whatever reason. It ended up being that high school students would go to either elementary or middle schools and assist in the class, almost like a teacher's aide. And that's when I

really started liking teaching and working with the eighth graders.

For many of the participants, the reason they became an educator was through coaching. They maintained that their interest and experiences in athletics, combined with an inspiring relationship from their coach, who many stated was an African American educator, was their gateway into the field of education. A high school Physical Education teacher and head football coach stated, “I grew up playing sports my entire life. I wanted to continue doing something with athletics. If I want to coach high school sports, I have to be a teacher.” One head principal said, “I was an athlete, and I knew if I wasn't going to be a professional, I want to coach. I knew education was the avenue to coach.” Comparably, a physical education teacher and basketball coach stated:

> I've always wanted to work with young people and help them develop. I've always been interested in that. It kind of stemmed from me playing basketball and kind of enjoying the intangible parts of teaching, learning the game, and sharing knowledge about the game. So it kind of tied in with basketball, and I played sports. What’s funny is, they started calling me coach when I was like 13. They would just call me coach. So coaching is teaching, the way I see it, and coaching and teaching just kind of went hand in hand.

Additionally, a middle school math teacher who has been in the profession for 11 years stated:

> I kind of fell into teaching. My older brother was a coach of my nephew's basketball team, and he wanted some help. I used to play basketball, so I helped out and just loved working with kids. I continued to coach for the next ten years after that. Later, I wanted to coach on the high school level but realized I couldn't

> really coach unless I was teaching, so I went back and got my certifications and everything. I just kind of fell into it.

An assistant principal and athletic director also expressed:

> I got into education from an athletic coaching standpoint. I always know I want to work with young people in terms of coaching. I did not know that I would want to become a teacher until I was transitioning from a previous career. I volunteered at my old High School as a coach. I was helping the football team, the track team, and one thing led to another. I applied for a position in the district, one thing led to another, I went back to school to become alternatively certified, and I became a teacher.

Another assistant principal stated:

> I secured an opportunity to as a volunteer coach at the local YMCA for my son's basketball team. At the time, he was young, maybe four or five. That experience changed my life. Working with those young men, I found a passion for working with young black males that led to tutoring opportunities for me, which ultimately led to me seeking a position at a local high school just to work with kids. I found a passion for it.

Likewise, a principal asserted:

> I got into education because I wanted to coach. While I was coaching, I decided to be a substitute teacher to provide some income for me, and then through my success as a substitute teacher, I just decided that maybe I could do this for a living. So I went back to school to become a teacher. I still didn't aspire to be an administrator. I just went back to school to be a teacher.

In gathering additional data for this research question, participants were asked to consider whether family and friends were encouraging or discouraging once they had made the decision to become an educator. Many of the educators' replies indicated they were encouraged when they shared their plans. Such was the case with a physical education teacher who has been an educator for 18 years, who was told by his professor that “she thought I would make an excellent teacher because I'm an African American male.” Similarly, a high school social studies teacher with 30 years of teaching experience expressed that “I mostly received encouragement, especially from my parents. I think they were just happy that I was seriously pursuing something that I would want to do after college.” Another participant was also encouraged to enter the profession and credited his “former high school teacher and football coach to not only get into education but to get into coaching.” Similarly, a middle school principal asserted, “I'm a product of a generation of teachers; my mother and my father both were. My nuclear family was very supportive of my decision to become an educator.”

Although the majority of the African American male educators interviewed were encouraged to enter the profession by family and friends, others received negative feedback when sharing their decision to teach. One teacher stated, “there were a couple of folks who were like, you know, teachers don't get paid that much, and it was kind of like salary type stuff.” Another was asked, “Why would you want to go be with some bad kids?” A third teacher, reflecting on his decision to become an educator, recalled the interaction he had with his mother when he shared his intentions:

> I remember telling my mom that I was going to major in education. And she said, No, you're not gonna major in education, you want to go to school, and you want

> to major in business because I don't want you being poor your whole life. That's what she told me. She said you're gonna be a businessman because, in her mind, people who majored in business made money, and that is what she wanted me to do.

Despite the negative comments, the participants continued to choose to become teachers and have had extensive careers in education.

Given that students often turn to role models and individuals they respect or idolize to emulate, participants for this study were asked if they had any African American male teachers during elementary, middle, or high school. A few of the participants went to schools within their communities for elementary and middle school, and the majority of their teachers were African American and female, but they did have African American male teachers and administrators throughout that time. However, many of these teachers were bussed to suburban, predominately White high schools as part of a desegregation initiative and did not have any African American male teachers. Such was the case with an administrator who has been an educator for 40 years, wh recalled that "In middle school, I had plenty African American Male teachers, but in high school, because I was part of the desegregation program, I went to a predominantly White high school. I didn't have any African American Male teachers." Another interviewee stated, "There was one African American male in the building where I went to school, but he was never my teacher. My sixth-grade music teacher and one of the assistant football coaches was an African American male." Similarly, another educator stated, "I only had two African American male teachers from kindergarten all the way to eighth grade. One was my eighth grade PE teacher, and the other was my sixth grade; they

called it language arts back then." While another participant stated, "I didn't have an African American male teacher until the eighth grade, and he was my science teacher," another educator said he did not have any African American male educators until he went to college. Sharing a similar experience, another teacher asserted, "I did not have even a Black teacher until I went to college. And that was a teacher who was actually from Africa. But other than that, like I, all my teachers have always been White." Likewise, a participant responded, "I attended rural schools when I was growing up. I had African American female teachers, but I did not have any black male teachers. In fact, I didn't have any African American male teachers until I got to college."

Research Question Two

The second research question guiding this study was, *How do male African American teachers perceive that their presence in PK-12 school settings can further mitigate negative perceptions of the efficacy and potential of African American students?* Data for this question was gleaned from asking interviewees what roles they fill for students because of their race and gender. The intent of this question was to determine how African American male educators met the social and emotional needs of same-race, same-sex students to improve their educational experience and how they are perceived. Most of the participants responded that they served as role models and advocates for students. One educator responded:

> Being in an urban setting, I take it upon myself to carry a torch to try to be a role model. I see the ramifications of how sometimes our young black youth need that role model; they need that advocate to intervene or to cause the intervention; they need the African American male role model, or African American period. But sometimes you see yourself, therefore sometimes you can't help but intervene

> when, unfortunately, cultures clash, and sometimes they don't see the difference. So you have to be that advocate for that person, so just watching being in a predominantly urban setting. But even when you have non-blacks dealing with a situation, I thought it was only best to make sure that we created an even playing field.

A teacher of 30 years reflected on the importance of his role as a teacher and a mentor and referred to the responsibility he felt for his position. He stated:

> I really think that I am more than just a teacher. I take that seriously. I spend a lot of time talking to our students about what they're going to do after they graduate. So I am a counselor. I believe that sometimes I'm a second father to some of these kids, and I take that role seriously. I think that there are times where the students can come and say things to me that they possibly couldn't say to other teachers, based on my being a black male. I think that's true. In the last 15 years, I've really tried to embrace that rather than sort of act like it wasn't important. I don't know if I felt like that would improperly define me, but I had a principal who always told us, we all are in the business of saving lives. I had never looked at it like that. So even though I didn't mind sitting down with the kid and helping them with an issue. If they needed a job or if they needed to make some money to buy something, I would always help them with those things. I didn't make a deal out of it, but I think after that experience, I felt like I needed to embrace that because if I didn't do it, then I would have to wait on somebody else to do it. And if no one else does it, then there's a kid dangling out there that needed some help, and if they don't get that help, that's on me. So probably in the

> last 15 or so years, I've really taken that role seriously.

Another participant who spoke of providing students direction reported:

> I think it's just a living example, a daily life example of what it looks like to walk with pride and the liberation of learning how to navigate spaces. I have a lot of informal conversations with my young Black males, like knowing how to navigate the game, having freedom, and not letting people police you to the things that have in place in a formal way. But also recognizing that you will be judged fairly or unfairly by how you look. So serving as a daily example to them and just someone who drops knowledge to him. That's probably the biggest thing you do for our young Black males.

Similarly, another participant stated:

> First of all, I'm a role model. I don't preach one thing or say one thing and act differently. I think I walk what I talk from that standpoint. I try to fulfill a lot of different roles, a counselor, a role model, a friend. I try to provide a vision for them to be able to see how the challenges that they may face and how having good habits, as well as how education and being a hard worker and dependable, whether that's academically or within a trade that can lead to their success.

While all of the interviewees had similar replies, one of the administrators elaborated further:

> One of my pillars is all about building relationships. So, in that process of building relationships, it kind of ventures off into what students need. So, what they need sometimes is a listener. Sometimes that need is to be a mentor. Sometimes that need is to be almost viewed as an uncle or a daddy. Sometimes

> they need an advisor. Sometimes it's spiritual. It's the whole umbrella of what some of our kids need filling. Where ever they have a shortage in their life is what a lot of them come to me to be for them. Sometimes I'm inspirational or a role model, just because of the enthusiasm I think I bring to the plate. Fundamentally, that's why I dress the way I dress for work. I think our African American community needs to see a Black man who can dress and look the part and be professional. Not just wearing a hoodie, a do-rag or, pants hanging down. I think they need to see a role model in a person that they can aspire to be, or they have hoped for, other than in their own environment. So, I think that's the whole gamut. So simplistically, mental, physical, and emotional needs sometimes; the whole gamut. It's just lost culture. Just being that to say, "Do the right thing, sir." You know, and knowing that is okay. Another one of my tenants is saying two scoops. The concept of the first scoop is to inspire kids to dare to have a dream. Then the second scoop essentially is to do everything intrinsic to make the dream happen. So, have a dream, and then make it happen. But then you got to do all the things that you got to do to get there.

Another question participants were asked relating to this essay question was if they thought their gender and race had been a factor in their success as an educator. One educator spoke of the positive reinforcement and accolades they received when they told people what he does. Another spoke of success in terms of students acknowledging that he was the first African American male teacher they had as they were starting the 7th grade. A principal replied:

> I believe both my gender and race have because they've both, I think, enabled me

> to connect with students in a different way. I think that's an advantage. Because of my lived experiences, I can identify with students when they have experiences in the same or similar spaces or help them avoid making some of the mistakes I did along the way during my journey. I count that as a benefit.

A school counselor highlighted not only the lack of African American males in certified positions but their alarming absence in schools where the student demographics are predominately African American and male. He asserted:

> Yes, I do believe race and gender have been a factor in my success as an educator because of the fact that if you look in a lot of schools, there's not a lot of black male teachers. It kind of always perturbs me when the highest number of African American employees, or especially males, within a system of importance, as education is only led by the custodial staff. That's kind of disappointing. It also disturbs me when you have a high percentage of a school that is made up of a very high percentage of African American students, and you have maybe one teacher of color in your English, math, science, or social studies department. And we don't even want to go in terms of from an administrative standpoint, where, you know, there's no representation of color in your administrative staff, whether that's at the district level or at the high school administrative level. So there are a lot of challenges within school districts that don't have, and I'm not saying that White or any other races of teacher can't teach our African American males, but I think if you have a priority in terms of your kids, I think there has to be some strong representation of the people where they feel that they can turn to get the support that they need. I just think that it's important in this day and age that our

> students of color have someone in the building in either of those capacities, in the same department, as assistant principals, somewhere that they can connect with and feel that they can find support.

One principal revealed that his race and gender allowed him to find a niche in urban public schools in his response:

> I do believe my race and gender have been a factor in my success. I think one of the reasons why my experiences have been limited is because I've mainly been in urban education. As a black man, I feel like it's played to my strengths, based on where I've been as an educator. But, I think it has been a challenge when I tried to enter suburban school districts, apply for jobs, and not receive callbacks or interviews. I think those things do factor in at those points. But, the main reason why I've been able to dodge a lot of biases or racism is that I mainly stayed in the urban school districts and have been able to navigate the space successfully.

Another participant commented:

> You know, when it comes to education, gender and race, maybe kind of got me in the door, but it still comes down to you getting to those students. I think gender and race really probably affect my ability to connect with my students and not just the black ones. I connect with the non-Blacks, like students also. But when it comes down to a classroom full of African American students, I can kind of get them going. For the most part, it's been working, and I would attribute it to me being able to connect with students, and even more so the African American students that maybe most teachers cannot connect with them that well, and that is probably due to race.

The third question that African American male educations were asked to obtain qualitative data for this research question was who important was it to have African American male educators for African American male students. One administrator answered, “On a scale of one to ten, I would say having African American male teachers for African American male students is a 12. I believe it is extremely important.” Another participant responded:

> If the African American male is dedicated and truly passionate about teaching, it is of paramount importance. Any teacher who decides to teach needs to be, especially in this day and time, their heart needs to be in the right place. And they've got to have a passion for working with kids because kids can sense that if you're not. My whole point of being there for them is to help them navigate this thing, not just high school, not just school, navigate beyond high school.

Another administrator conveyed that for African American male students, some same-gender, same-race teachers brought a heightened sense of authority to the classroom. He noted:

> It's a very important part to be able to learn from somebody that looks like you. In some instances, it makes it a little easier because you feel a little more comfortable. The hard part and the saddest thing about it is we've always been a dying breed. You would listen more; you would be more in tune. As a kid, when I got to high school and actually had a chance to have a black male teacher, there wasn't all of that joking around playing in the classroom. It was like, hey, I'm here getting this knowledge from somebody that looked like me.

Similarly, another participant expressed how, for him, having an African American male

teacher presented education as a possible career choice for African American male students. He reflected that:

> Having African American male teachers for same-race, same-gender students is integral. This is so important because I saw right there in front of me; even though at that time I didn't know I wanted to be an educator, seeing people like me doing it didn't make it seem like it was far fetched or out of reach when I decided to do it when I was a senior. I had two African American male teachers who really stood out in my mind. The first was my fifth-grade teacher, who was also my third and fourth-grade basketball coach. The second was a social studies teacher who was someone who had always been a strong, Black male educator, who really made me start thinking about education because the way he talked about the world was important and powerful. He allowed me to see the world through a Black man's eyes. So I had two strong black men who were in leadership at my school, so it wasn't far-fetched at all for me to think that I could do something like this. So it was integral to have these black males as part of my educational journey.

Another participant responded to this question by stating:

> I think it's extremely important to have African American male teachers, particularly for all young African American males. I think it's important for African Americans to see someone who may have some of the same struggles or understand some of the things that they go through and be able to relate to them. I'm a very strong supporter of culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum. I think blacks, having some representation and having been taught by black

> teachers, I think that's very beneficial to our students, particularly in urban settings.

One administrator maintained that though the race of the teacher may be important for African American male students, there is more needed than just that. He stated:

> I think it's important to have African American male teachers for African American male students, but it's not the be-all, end-all. The reason I think it's important is young people need to see that somebody that looks like them can lead a classroom, show empathy, and have the same kinds of emotions as others. If they always see someone else leading the charge and that person does not look like them, or if that person is not a male, they begin to believe they can't do it or that it isn't a job for someone that looks like them.

Research Question Three

This study also sought data pertaining to the question, *What do male African American teachers perceive as prevalent barriers to entry into the education profession, and how did they affect African American teachers' consideration of a career in education?* For this inquiry, the researcher considered the academic environment for African American male students from elementary through post-secondary education to reveal any social, racial, or gender biases that would pose as barriers for candidates considering a career in education. Participants were first asked to reflect on their years in elementary and secondary public schools and, based on their experiences and how they were treated, would they characterize public schools as a hostile learning environment for African American male students. The majority of the interviewees stated that they were supported and nurtured, especially in elementary and middle school. One participant

stated:

> My elementary and secondary schools were structured, organized, and caring. I thought it was a great situation. I don't know if it was consciously or more subconsciously that I saw that you could do some great things as a teacher. I saw there were really good teachers and I had some really good teachers. I kind of said, okay, this is something that I can definitely do. I think that's just a subconscious bug that was in my head all the time.

One administrator alluded to teacher reactions to and perceptions of African American male students in his statement, “I think middle and high schools can be a hostile learning environment for African American male students, but I think you have to be able to look through the middle school behaviors to see the student's potential behind it.” Similarly, a teacher responded, “I wouldn't say urban public schools are hostile environments for African American male students, but they are definitely biased against them.” A high school choir teacher with only five years of teaching experience shared what he witnessed in his statement:

> I think one, it depends on the school, but I would say yes, it can be a hostile environment for African American males. I have seen with my own eyes. And I'll say even Black teachers assume more guilt or are quicker to take a hostile tone or to be quicker with slapping disciplinary sanctions on our Black males than on other students. I see it all the time. If anybody walks into a place and the people in power treat them as if they don't belong or treat them as if they can't do anything right, you're going to what? You're going to act out. You're going to say, you know what, fine, I don't care and give up. You're going to be apathetic.

And we've just seen those statistics plummet.

An administrator who was interviewed spoke about the culture and climate that African American male students contend within schools. He stated:

> Generally, I will say elementary and secondary schools are absolutely hostile educational environments for African American male students: however, personally, that has not been my experience. I think we did have some folks who ascribe to white, hegemony, middle-class white thought, and they impose those values on us as students, whether they were well-intentioned or not. I do believe that occurred. I think that generally speaking, when you talk about education in the United States, we're definitely creating a covert and overt hostility when it comes to the education of kids. And that comes in the form of what we're, what we're asking them to learn, how we're asking them to learn it. The strategies that we're not utilizing that are more amiable to black peoples and people of color’s way of being and belonging; I think that is hostile. Even if it's not outright overt, you can point at it,” have a nice day” racism; there are some things that are very hostile about the way we educate kids. This affects our African American male students in a very negative way. If students don't, first and foremost, see themselves in the curriculum, it's hard to connect to it. That's just any human being. We are not using common sense when it comes to the education of kids. Because if I had somebody who absolutely hates, I don't know, gardening, and I talk to them about gardening all day long, they're not going to be connected to it. But, if I find a way to form some analogies that get them connected to things that they're interested in and teach them things they need to know that's relevant to

> them, then I can connect with them. So we're not connecting with kids where we should. So there's, there's a lot of things we need to do differently with education.

The educators interviewed for this study were also asked to describe their teacher education programs in terms of race and gender, highlighting any racism or discrimination they may have encountered. Responses to this question would expose potential barriers faced by African American male teacher candidates and ultimately limit their presence in public urban schools. The majority of the participants interviewed had attended Historically Black Colleges or Universities and reported, “I didn't experience any issues based on race or gender. I went to an HBCU, and it was my first time really being comfortable in an educational setting.” Another participant noted, “I was the only African American male graduate in my teacher education program,” while another mentioned,

> I was the only African American male in my cohort, so reality started to set in. People will ask, how come you don't have any black teachers in your school district, or how come you are not hiring any black teachers? I think the reality of that is, if there are none going into the profession, there are none to recruit or hire. So, the reality that I'm the only African American that is gonna come out of this program, I felt that I had to finish.

Similarly, a teacher stated, “There were a few African American males in my degree program, but not many. It was one of those things that the higher you go, the filter was on, so they got limited the higher I went.” Another educator spoke about the enthusiasm some programs had over having African American males in their program. He commented:

> No, I did not experience any issues due to race or gender in my program. I'm really grateful for my program. I think, if anything, there was more eagerness because of the demographic that I fit, right. It's like, you know, black male teachers and black male nurses, oh you come here. You know, we're more of a unicorn. I didn't encounter any bias towards me. If anything, probably a bit too much coddling? That’s probably not the right word. Too much eagerness? But no, no issues with race or gender.

There was one individual participant who spoke of experiencing racism in his teacher education program, but it was in the community and not on campus. He disclosed:

> In college, I would be the only African American around a lot of times, but with that program, they intentionally brought in African Americans and other marginalized groups of people in order to provide experiences. So there's this one particular situation where they sent some of the interns into the field to collect some samples of frogs. So you had an African American, a White guy who was an atheist, a young Jewish lady, and you had an Asian young man, it sounds like a bad joke. But we were in a flea market just looking around, and this person told us not to touch everything. Stop touching all the stuff. And we thought maybe they had some vested interest in the flea marketing, scared that their stuff was going to get broken. No, they were customers just like us. So it led to us having some pretty meaningful, interesting conversations.

A principal spoke about the feeling of not belonging at a predominately White university and being an African American male in an education program. He disclosed:

> I was the only African American male in English education in my cohort in

> college. I felt isolated. Socially on a day-to-day basis, I felt isolated. But I have always had the ability to look long-term. So the day-to-day didn't keep me from doing what I ultimately wanted to do. I went into education for a reason, and when you go into something with purpose, the small things like feeling isolated don't stop you. I had a best friend that I grew up with who was kind of like what they call a throwaway kid. He went to one of the elementary schools and was in BD classes. He was kind of written off even before he really had a chance. So I would just look at him and other kids who were similar to him and say, you know, this is not fair. They need someone who's going to support them, and that's why I wanted to go into education. So when I got on that campus and saw that I was the only Black male who was in secondary English in my cohort, it felt very isolating. And we did assignments that made me feel even more isolated. In the midst of hundreds of white, young white women, young white girls, and I stood out like a sore thumb, but it didn't keep me from focusing on where I wanted to go.

Comparably, a teacher spoke of feeling a similar sense of isolation in a predominately Black setting, noting:

> There were no African American males in my teacher education program. Zero. And I went to an HBCU. It made me wonder if I was making the right decision. I mean, even though I had three years to go in the program, I kept wondering, am I doing the right thing? I just stuck to my guns. I began reading a lot of different articles and things being printed at the time, like Ebony Magazine or some books that I started reading about the importance of African American males in the classroom. I did a lot of praying and asking God whether I was doing the right

thing. Did I make the right decision? And so, I kind of stuck to my guns.

During the interview, participants were asked what reasons they would give for the underrepresentation of African America male teachers in public urban schools. A common throughout the responses was salary. One participant said:

> The money. Teaching is not a real lucrative profession. I think most of my friends never thought about being a teacher. They all do other things. None of them thought about being a teacher, and I think it is probably because of the money or because they don't have the patience to deal with younger teenagers other than their own.

One principal suggested that African American male students can not aspire to be something they do not see, noting the absence of African American teachers in the classroom or being portrayed on television or movies. He maintained:

> One barrier to entering the teaching profession is it's not so is not a glamorous job. The perception is that educators don't make a lot of money. Secondly, so many of our African American males, while in middle school and high school, myself included, want to be some kind of entertainer, whether it's athletics, music producer, acting, and that's where we typically see black males. You know, when we turn on a TV and see black males in a positive light, they're either athletes, actors, comedians, or some kind of musician. I think that's what we see, so that's where we can insert ourselves. None of those professions lends themselves to trying to be an educator. The other times that we see black men really doing well is as a businessman, lawyer, or doctor. So our perception of what success looks like, as black people, usually falls in those categories. The principalship or being

> a teacher is not highly regarded as a successful career for black people. Teaching isn't necessarily highly regarded as a successful career for Blacks because they continue to get the connotation that educators are underpaid. That continues to be the perception. So I think the underrepresentation comes from our access to what we see as successful black men, generally doctors, lawyers, entertainers.

Another participant also stated:

> We often tell folks that educators are poorly compensated, that the pay is not very good. They know that teachers have to deal with a variety of issues, have a lot on their plates, and wear many hats, Sometimes the folks that we are working with or working for may not always have the best intentions or good attitudes, and you still got to be able to deal with that. So a lot of African American males prefer career pathways other than teaching because it's hard.

A teacher commented:

> Teaching is something that you have to have in your heart to do, and many people just don't have it. They always want to joke with teachers and say, those who can't, teach and all of that stuff. It's not true. You have to want to do this, and you can't be for the money because we don't get paid that way. I don't know what I could say to convince you to become a teacher, but teaching has got to be something that you love to do, and it's got to be something for which you have the patience. We don't have any black male teachers, so why would a black male think about teaching?

A participant who is a high school counselor replied:

> I think that the only reason a lot of Black males go into education is to coach. I

> just feel that the profession of teaching, in this day and age, doesn't appeal to students. It's too challenging. They understand the challenge that they had in high school, and I think it's because of the experiences that they had as students. Education doesn't seem like a very welcoming or promising profession for young men of color. I think a lot of that is based on their experiences. I think it has to do with its not appealing and because of the bad experiences. They didn't have a great experience themselves. And in this day and age, the servanthood of seeing a need within the community and trying to be that light or that resource to bring about change, I don't think it appeals to the young man of today's culture.

Another teacher attributed the underrepresentation of African American males in education to the salary. He maintained:

> They don't see it as a lucrative position. They don't see it as an outlet to make a lot of money. And, obviously, the educational structure is not set for recruiting teachers or molding would-be teachers. I think it's a little bit of a cantankerous environment with a lot of circumstances that push people away from wanting to be teachers. There's a lot of teachers that teach just to be doing something, and some teachers are really passionate about education.

One administrated referred to the time, money, and effort needed to become a teacher as he commented:

> I don't want to sit here and classify black men and the reasons why black men do not get into education, but I do strongly believe that it's because of the lack of financial means the field of education offers and even working your way up and going back to school, for some, is probably not very appealing because you have

> to go back to school and pay to become certified. I think that definitely plays a significant role in the lack of representation for black men.

While salary may be the most prevalent reason African American males do not consider education as a possible career choice, one teacher suggests that there are underlying factors that are also deterrents. He maintains:

> Factors for the underrepresentation of African American male educators? Man, the web goes so deep. I mean, even when you go back to just the way that district lines are drawn. The way that schools are funded affects things like student performance recruitment. There are a lot of factors. Sometimes it's the rigor; in terms of general academics, a lot of times, the rigor of our is not what it should be. So, students get to college and realize this is a lot harder because they didn't learn certain habits in high school, and that hurts them a lot. Sometimes it's just not having the financial intelligence to be able to navigate the college admission process. You know, "My parents never went to college; they don't know how to help me out." A lot of times, the counselors are busy dealing with social-emotional issues with trauma, with discipline, with all these sorts of other things that they're not able to have these College and Career talks with students. I know for a fact that our counselors aren't able to have those types of conversations because they're so bogged down with all of these other things. And we have a lot of potentially college-bound, potentially future educator kids who are slipping through the cracks, essentially. And then, God forbid, you get an administrator who's either on a tear or doesn't know what they're doing and tries to restructure things, and it doesn't work out for that school. Then you have an entire generation

> of students who are negatively affected, which we see so often at our urban and low SES schools.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question for this study is *How do male African American teachers perceive race impacting African American male teachers' elementary, secondary, and preparation for post-secondary education?* Participants were asked to elaborate on two questions in order to obtain qualitative data for this scholarly query. First, the educators were asked if they had ever experienced racism or discrimination during their educational careers. The purpose of this question was to determine if there were marginalizing practices that may have discouraged other students from considering education as a career choice. Nearly all of the participants denied experiencing racism in elementary school because they may have been too young to understand why they were being treated that way, or it was so long ago that they could not recall any instances of racism. One administrator commented:

> I think I was too naive to realize any racism in my younger years. I definitely don't think I was immune to it, but I was just too naive to realize it was racism. I remember, you know, I remember kids asking about my hair and stuff like that, but at the time, I didn't think it was racist. I remember the first time really experiencing racism when I got to college and played baseball, of course, being the only black kid on the team playing baseball. That's when I actually remember experiencing racism that was blatant in your face.

A teacher had a similar experience and responding:

> I was too young to perceive any type of hostility all the way through elementary

> school. Once I got to the third grade, going to school was very enjoyable, I love to learn. I never felt any type of hostility from teachers whatsoever. In high school, I remember it was prior to Dr. King's birthday being nationally celebrated. I went to school, and I just taped something on my shirt saying happy MLK Day. Before the end of the day, a white guy with who I played football had a happy General Robert E. Lee day on his shirt. So that was etched into my memory.

Another teacher credited his parents for being active in his education as the reason for not having to endure any racism or discrimination in elementary or secondary education and his competitive nature for rising above it in college. He stated:

> I didn't experience any racism from classmates or from the teachers. Fortunately, I had an active family, so that wasn't going down anyway. They were very active in the education process. But no, I really didn't see any type of disparity. And so, when I got to college, I was the only Black student in my class. I think that's why I'm so self-sufficient now. Other students didn’t want to work with me. I thought that was fine. I don't need to work with you, I'll do my own stuff, and my stuff will be better than yours. That competition mentality was instilled in me as a youth, but I really utilized it when I got to college, especially when you got to the upper levels of education courses, where you really don't see anybody who looks like you. And when it came time to do group work, whether it was to form your curriculum or whatever the assignment may have been, outside of my college teammates that I had classes with, like the average student, I was like, Nah.

An administrator noting an incident that happened in college responded:

> Schooling wasn’t an issue in terms of racism. When I got to college, it was a huge cultural shock, though, as I was used to going to urban schools all throughout elementary, middle, and high school. And then you go to a predominantly white institution with 28,000 students, and only 6% of them look like you. And that 6% may look like you, but they're scattered all across a huge campus, so you don't see a whole lot of them. And there were some blatantly racist things that were occurring, and there were these overt, stereotypical things that were happening as well. I remember I was a freshman on campus, and I was going through my own identity journey, of course, and I'll never forget, looking back, it seems so silly, but they had a watermelon eating contest in the middle of the freakin quad. You know, just silly stuff that was occurring that seems so apparent now but flies under the radar when you're just an impressionable young adult trying to figure things out.

Another teacher commented on how race impacted his education as a light-skinned African American. He stated:

> I experienced a lot of predominantly microaggressions being multiracial, being light-skinned, and being, at a glance, pretty racially ambiguous except for when I grow my hair out. I've been able to pass for a lot of folks, like light enough for certain folks, so I've experienced some privilege and tokenism, a lot of tokenism through that, but also lots of microaggressions. A little bit of overt racism. When I was growing up, there was a lot of having to feel like I had to choose between different parts of my identity. I wasn't white enough for the white kids. I wasn't black enough for the black kids. And so I was just kind of here in the middle

> feeling like, well I've got these elements of both cultures, but I'm not enough for either. I kind of always had to figure out how to navigate that middle way. In retrospect, that offered me a really great opportunity growing up, to be able to see different perspectives, to be able to understand people with different belief systems than I do, because I've always had to navigate that line. And it was a line that was thrust onto me, not one that I navigated willingly. I had to figure it out in order to fit in.

Two of the participants interviewed implied that educationally, they were unaffected by race or racism. A teacher replied, “Race didn't impact my education at all through from elementary through high school. I did not experience any racism or discrimination throughout that time.” The other participant, an administrator, stated:

> As I reflect on my time as a student from elementary up through high school, I do not recall an incident where I could blame something on race. I went to a predominantly white university, or the black population was very minimal compared to other races, but not even there. Maybe it was because I played football and I was an athlete that I was accepted, but I don't recall any issues with race, race relations, or anything like that.

A third educator stated though he had not experienced racism or discrimination in school, he had, indeed, witnessed it. He said:

> There were times that you see, I hate to call it racism, but sometimes you do see the mistreatment of students by teachers who do not look like them, who have not lived in the communities that they live in, who have not endured some of the hardships that students have endured. I've seen quite a bit of that. I see that all

> the time. Those teachers want to do right, but I don't think they know how to do right.

The second question participants were asked for this research question was, what effect do racism and discrimination have on the academic achievement of African American male students. This question sought to determine if, based on the experiences and opinions of the participants, the efficacy of African American male students has been impacted by race. Reflecting on his personal experiences, one educator replied:

> Racism and discrimination did impact me educationally. One of my worst experiences would probably be as a student-athlete; I eventually walked away from sports, which had definitely had a negative impact on my life. Think that was my worst memory of high school is walking away from sports, something I'd invested my entire life in because I did not feel welcomed or supported in the school community. And labeled, I felt like I was labeled

Another educator experienced discrimination in the form of assumed academic dishonesty due to his race. He stated:

> I felt as though my intelligence was questioned. Oftentimes that it was difficult for people to believe that my grades were my own; I felt as if I had to prove myself more than any of my white classmates would have had to. It just made for a negative experience, man. Yeah, it really did. I didn't get hit with the stereotype so much as there was this sense of skepticism around whether I was as intelligent as my grades reflected.

One teacher who witnessed what he referred to as a racially charged event while in high school commented:

> We're in the gym, and a White student threw a ball across the gym? The teacher came over and just assumed my homeboy did it and let him have it. I was like, he didn't do it. It was the other guy. We tried to explain it to him, but it took the White dude to say, “Oh, I did that.” No apology, no, nothing. He told the White student, just don't do that again and walked off like ain't nothing happened. I mean, don't get me wrong. My homeboy was no angel, but that preconceived notion that he just automatically assumed he did it because he was tatted up with braids, the corn roll. It took for somebody else to admit that they did it. That left a lasting impression on him and how you deal with his kids in school to this day.

An administrator recalled being a student-teacher liaison for White male teachers and African

American male students. He replied:

> I can recall times when I was working my way up from instructional aid, the interactions with some of the White male teachers with some of the students of color were, in my opinion, not handled the way they should be handled. I was actually called on a lot to help support classroom management issues, especially the three years that I served as an instructional aide while working to become alternately certified to be a teacher. I was called on a lot to kind of be that that tweener between a teacher and a student if and when needed. But, there were definitely times when I thought the race of the scholar played a role in the classroom discipline and how things were handled or not handled accordingly. There was an overarching theme of, and you heard a lot of "these students" and what “these students” can or cannot do. There was a fixed mentality and mindset

> with some of my previous colleagues, and it was definitely an issue at times.

Research Question Five

Which factors contributed to the decision of African American males to remain in education or consider leaving the profession was the fifth research question for this study. The researcher sought to understand the professional environment of the participants for reasons educators would seek to leave or remain in the profession. The first question participants were asked was if they had experienced any racism or discrimination from peers or administrators as African American male educators. The participants were then asked if they had ever considered leaving the profession. One administrator mentioned:

> I was the only black teacher in an all-white department that had their norms, culture, and ways of doing things. And I was this guy who was new to education and from a different background. So I wasn't really supported. And I wasn't really welcomed and embraced and had to really find my way on my own. Learn to my own bumps and bruises. It was challenging. But any instance of racism you can imagine, I mean, I've heard racist comments made by teachers, teachers not willing to work with me to share resources and leave me on my own to find my own way, disingenuous actions, and backstabbing. Questioning, once again, my intelligence, double-checking my work, asking students about the validity of my work. You know, insulting stuff. But I just had to find a way to persevere, and I grew from the experience, and I'm still here. And I've used those experiences to help mentor students with whom I have interacted.

When asked if he had considered leaving the profession, the administrator referenced a

sense of duty and responded:

> I have thought about leaving the profession, but what has kept me here is a commitment to students and the mindset that if I don't, who will? Someone has to. And for students who are used to people leaving them or not being dependable or being able to count on anyone, not wanting to be or not wanting to contribute to that narrative in any way in the lives of our students. Yes, I've definitely had questions about remaining in the profession along the way, but the kids have kept me here. I love working with students. Not so much with the adults, but the students.

Another participant recalled an instance with a co-worker that was racially charged. He mentioned:

> When I came back to my hometown to teach, I literally had one of the teachers that I never had his class as a student come up to me during a break in a faculty meeting and say, you know, I honestly didn't think I'd ever see someone like you here. I said, what do you mean by that? What do you mean by that? And he goes, well, you know, you had your issues. I said I was like every other kid, I had some issues, but I started naming off some people who I went to school with, who were some of my White friends. I said they had some of the same issues I had. I'll admit I did some things I said, but there are some people that you all like to point out as being pillars of our community that did the same thing because we were together when it happened. He said I didn't mean to offend you. Then he apologized and left the conversation really quickly. It got me pretty fired up. It offended me.

Despite this episode, his answer to whether he had ever considered leaving the profession was a resounding no. He replied:

> I feel that this is what I was meant to do. I was put on this earth by God to do what I'm doing. And so doing another job has never occurred to me. As it turns out, the two things that that I feel like I'm best at are football and history, so it kind of fits. It works out well because I get paid for doing two things that I really, really like to do. So, I feel like what I do is important. I feel like it allows me to look at my family and say I'm doing my best to take care of you all. I'm doing something that my family can be proud that I'm doing. It's who I am and what I'm meant to be.

One participant stated that he had not seen or witnessed any racism or discrimination towards him as a professional. However, when asked if he had ever considered leaving the profession, the educator stated, “I don't get up and go to work. I go to my purpose. It's easy to go when you know you're going to your purpose.” I can’t fathom doing anything else.

Another teacher remembered his first day as a teacher in the district and how blatant the racism was towards him as an African American male. He disclosed:

> So my first day, fresh out of college, out of my master's program. We had come in for intruder training, and there happened to be a rope in one of the rooms. One of the teachers literally thought it was funny to put a noose around my neck. So, then we were sitting there doing the training, and I just happened to be sitting in the front. The trainer literally has ropes, and he slides them on my wrist to demonstrate how to deal with the intruder. But I'm like, Why me? Later that year,

> during Teacher Appreciation Month, the principal had gotten us all bath and Bodyworks soap. So I checked my check my box and noticed I had gotten green apple-scented soap. I was like, all right, I'll just grab it on my way out the door. I came back to leave, and someone had put watermelon soap in my box. And so, those are a couple of incidences that were literally blatant.

The participant did say he had considered leaving the profession but as a result of dealing with the difficulties associated with COVID-19.

The majority of the participants expressed not encountering racism or discrimination at work, but they also stated they love what they do and want to remain in the profession. One teacher commented, “I like what I do. It's been 11 years, but I'm not ready to leave yet.” Another teacher also said, “I haven't considered leaving the profession. I feel privileged and blessed that I have the opportunity to work with young people, and I don't take that for granted.” A principal conveyed a similar sentiment in his comments about leaving the profession, replying, “I've never seriously thought about going to another, another profession. I seriously can't see myself doing something outside of the field of education. A 30-year veteran high school teacher and football coach also commented:

> I haven't put any thought into leaving the profession. It's like I said, coaching is teaching, teaching is coaching, and I like to teach, and I like to coach. If I left one first, it would be teaching. I'll probably be coaching to about 100, Lord willing. I have no motivation to leave the field of education.

A middle school principal who has been in the profession for 35 years stated:

> I think about retirement and what that might look like for me. But I haven't

> thought about leaving the profession yet. I think what keeps me coming back is the ability to serve my building every single day, and I enjoy working with children, I enjoy working with adults, and I enjoy the education system. So I look forward to coming back and helping to make a difference in the lives of our children. I know that our Black children need to see Black men in leadership. I dress up every day, as much as I possibly can, because I want them to see a professional Black man. I try to greet them and be respectful to them because I want them to know that every Black man doesn't talk crazy to you and that we have value. Those are things that keep me coming back to my job every day right now.

Finally, another principal commented:

> No, I'll be an educator until I can't do it anymore. If I leave the profession, it will be for the legislature so I can shape educational policy and stop having these uneven pots of money based on the tax base and real estate taxes, determining what our schools are going to look like. That's the most racist thing I've ever heard. We should all have access to good schools. And when you think about access to good schools, there are good teachers in the buildings. I believe there are good teachers in every building, some better than others, but when you pass by the building, your perception of the buildings, first of all, which you're going to see from the outside. You shouldn't have weeds and pavement cracking. And so when you think about good schools, most people have a perception of a good school before they even set foot in school, before they even went online to see what the differences in ACT scores or what the differences are in discipline

> referrals. You're gonna ride by a school, and you're gonna look at the school and say that doesn't look like a good school. But then you'll ride by schools in the suburbs, and just because you see windows and it's nicely manicured, the assumption is it's a good school, and then a bunch of good teaching and learning is going on. And we get the idea that the absence of color makes it a good school. The absence of color makes it a good neighborhood. It's a salvage inequality, the way some of the shapes of our schools of color look, compared to the schools that have an absence of color.

Research Question Six

The final research question guiding this study was *How can PK-16 educational leaders inform and implement strategies to bolster future recruitment of African American male educators?* The purpose of this question was to identify what participants felt were characteristics of being an educator that could be improved to attract more African American males to the profession. One principal stated:

> The first thing I do is reach out to my alma mater to get a list of student teachers graduating in the fall and spring who are going to be certified. I call them personally and let them know that I'm interested in interviewing them. What I'm interviewing for is not content. If they are certified, that means you've done the coursework, and you've gone through the curriculum so they can teach math, teach art, or whatever it is. I'm looking for people that are going to be able to love kids. They are going to really invest and give 100% effort and come to work. That's what I'm investing in. And after that, I don't care about you being Black or White. The candidate that I need needs to come to work, give 100% effort, and

> love on kids. Just because you're Black doesn't mean that you're going to be the candidate, but it does mean I want to take a look at you. When it comes to recruitment, I would suggest being more aggressive with out-of-town groups and offering something like $1000 to $2,000 moving or signing bonus. Something to help with their move, especially if we're looking to recruit new students.that during the application review, "A lot of times, look at the names on the resumes and try to determine if it's possibly an African American male."

Another principal suggested a similar approach to recruiting African American males to the profession. He commented,

> To get more African American males into the profession, I think school districts need to visit more HBCUs, and I think they need to have some type of incentive. Maybe that's a bonus, a travel or relocation bonus or something like that. I think that would lure a lot of black males into a particular district and kind of talk about the demographics of the school district. And to me, the most important part is to send Black recruiters down there to get some of those scholars who are graduating.

Another administrator focused on the organization and its willingness to accept more diversity when he commented:

> I think that the recruitment should emphasize the ability you're attracted to, or being recruited based upon your ability, not simply because of the fact that you are African American because that begins to teeter on tokenism to some degree. I don't think that any Black candidate who is talented, as they're being recruited, should be made to feel as though they're being recruited to fill a quota or have

> concerns about whether the motives are genuine behind the recruitment. And I think that not only involves how you engage that individual, in terms of your words and dialogue around recruiting them, but also the system or organization that you represent. I think it should be oriented to support the arrival of recruited individuals and understands that if there are Blacks answering for the first time that there may be some differences there. The organization needs to be oriented to accept and be tolerant of those differences that are in place, as opposed to attempting to make someone assimilate or conform to their culture and way of being within the organization. I think the organization should bend to accept new people, as opposed to forcing new African American candidates into assimilating fully to their culture.

Comparably, another administrator replied:

> To recruit more African American male teachers, I would get high school kids in front of younger kids in mentoring programs. It's nothing like when you are doing a lesson, and the kids get it in a way that they hadn't before. It's magical. It's like one of the best feelings I've had, period. So I think if you can get kids to experience that feeling, that's the hook. The hook isn't a program or stuff like that. The hook is that feeling."

Finally, an administrator

> The issue is money. If I could, I would increase teachers' salaries to attract Black men because a Black man, being the head of the house, wants to be a provider. If he can financially provide for his family, then this profession may be more desirable. But, if a Black man has to work two, three jobs, then education may

not always be as desirable. Also, I would try to ensure Black male students have good experiences in school. If they have good experiences in school, the chances are this is a professional they may want to come back to. If you have great relationships with teachers and teachers put you in leadership roles and allow that job to be seen as a job of choice, then that's something that I would want to do. I think a lot of times, as educators, we're preparing kids to go out and do something great, but we don't prepare them to come back and be a part of something great. You know, we tell them, "You can't make no money being a teacher." Well, why are you a teacher? We have to change our views and beliefs about education and say, "You know what, I think you will make a great teacher. You need to come back here and teach. You've been a great student, and you obviously love school. Come back to the profession." But we don't do that. We just tell kids, "Go make money. You can make way more money doing something else. You don't want to do this job." Even though we love it, we make the job seem so bad that no one else should want to do it. I had other Black educators recruiting me. They were constantly in my ear, "You got to finish your degree. You got to finish your education." So I coached and worked with two certified teachers who were living a great lifestyle and were painting this beautiful picture and saying, "You need to be a part of this. You don't just need to have a job; you need to be a part of something bigger than you." They made me more hungry to be a teacher than I ever thought I would want to be.

Discussion

The following paragraphs contain a discussion of the as they pertain to the themes

and sub-themes identified in the qualitative data. The themes identified were: Mentoring: *Coaching, Inspiring and Encouraging;* Purpose: *Calling and Commitment.* Devalued: *Underpaid and unappreciated.*

Mentoring

The first theme was mentoring, which was divided into coaching, inspiring and encouraging. This study has revealed that mentorship is an essential part of being an educator for the mentor and the mentee. Many of the participants indicated that they had a mentor who encouraged them to become an educator. Most of these mentors were former teachers, as with the principal whose English teacher stated that she thought he would be a good teacher or the physical education teacher whose professor thought as an African American male, he would be a great educator. Others were colleagues who, as one interviewee recalled, urged him not to settle for being a paraprofessional but to go back to school and get his degree. This corresponds with Dinkins and Thomas' (2016) research asserting that educators who are mentors inspire others to be educators by “providing an example they wanted to replicate” (p. 30).

Several of the participants who attended a historically Black college or university (HBCU) had mentors who guided them through their teacher educator programs. They emphasized that their mentors helped them to acclimate to the post-secondary environment, advised them on completing their programs, and coached them on how to be successful as an educator. Sharpe and Hutchinson's (2018) research recognized the value of mentorship to pre-service teachers and claims, “positive student-faculty interactions enhance both the social and academic skills of all undergraduates—in particular, those of first-generation and low-income students—which in turn will improve

their rates of persistence and graduation" (p. 2). This holds true for those interviewed for this study, many of who state that their mentors are still providing guidance and assistance to them years after they have completed their degrees and working as educators.

Having benefited from having a mentor, all of the participants named being a mentor as one of the most important aspects of their job as an educator (El-Mekki, 2018; Goings & Bianco, 2016). They also maintained that having a strong, positive, African American male role model is what African American male students need most in urban school settings. All of the educators interviewed stressed the importance of developing positive relationships with their students and how "looking like them" made it easier for the students to relate to them. Three of the participants, who were principals, commented on how they dress professionally to provide an example of a successful African American male. Another principal spoke of greeting students and being a "cheerleader for them" to provide the encouraging interaction they would receive from a father. The educators also spoke of the absence of father figures in many African American families in urban communities. The participants' commitment to their African American male students suggests a sense of duty to "show them how to be men" (Bianco et al., 2011, p. 379).

Coaching

Over half of the participants interviewed stated that they got into education because they wanted to coach. A teacher interviewed commented, "I love coaching and working with kids, but the only way to do that at the high school level is to teach." Likewise, another teacher responded, "I loved coaching, but I had bills to pay. I got into teaching as a way to do both." In their research regarding social studies teachers being

required to coach as a stipulation for employment, Conner and Haeussler (2021) defined coaching contingency as "the need to coach in order to be hired to teach" (p.2). Conversely, the educators interviewed defined their experiences as a need to teach in order to coach, emphasizing the desire to coach over becoming an educator. Reflecting on how sports provided valuable life lessons, such as teamwork, commitment, and perseverance, for them in their youth, the educators strive to teach the same life lessons to African American males in the classroom and on the field.

Inspiring and Encouragement

The interviewees all spoke of someone who inspired to be educators or encouraged them to enter the profession. Whether it was an English teacher who saw past the rambunctious middle schooler to discover a gift of writing; a football coach who encouraged his former player to use his knowledge and expertise as an athlete to help other African American males to excel in the sport, or following in the footsteps of parents; all of the participants reflected on the how an African American male educator was instrumental in their success as educators. As a result, participants spoke of being role models or presenting themselves as individuals their students would want to emulate.

Being inspiring and encouraging are essential traits for African American male educators of same-race, same-gender students in urban settings. Given the poverty, high crime rates, and blight that plague most large urban communities, African American male students are often afflicted with trauma. Trauma, often manifested in students as emotional, social, or behavioral problems, often results in high discipline rates and reduced academic achievement (Terrasi & Crain de Galarce, 2017); however, through positive relationships with caring, trusted adults, the effects of trauma can be reversed.

This is the niche the participants strive to fill by seeking to inspire and encourage African American male students. "Once students feel safe, welcomed, and included, there is no reason why they cannot develop positive relationships, healthy habits, and the ability to regulate their own emotions and behaviors, as well as to succeed academically" (Terrasi & Crain de Galarce, 2017, p. 37).

Purpose

The second theme was mentoring, which was divided into calling and commitment. Of the 22 teachers and administrators interviewed, 12 of them spoke of becoming an educator as a calling or a career they were predestined to do. A principal stated that he was a product of a family of educators, so he knew it was what he was going to do." One teacher replied, "I whole-heartedly believe being an educator is what God put me on this earth to do." Another educator was inspired to switch his major to education during the last semester of this degree program after hearing the story of a destitute young girl and how she had to do to provide for her younger brother and herself. Others spoke of how their love of working with young people through coaching sports drew them to the profession. One educator spoke of being an educator as "going to my purposes every morning. It's not work if it is your purpose." Shipp (1999) identified educators' purpose as their contribution to society and found it to be the leading factor for African American males to enter the field of education.

Not all of the participants initially saw education as a calling. One administrator spoke of wanting to be a computer programing major but said, "once I got to calculus II and III, it changed my mind. Education was my second option." Similarly, another administrator wanted to be in marketing and wanted to make commercials for a living but

switched to education during his senior year. A teacher openly stated that he resisted becoming an educator stating, “I studied psychology. Teaching was the one profession specifically stated I did not want to do. but I loved working with young people.” Despite the reluctance of some of the participants to enter the profession, all of the interviewees alluded to the importance of being an educator. Though for some, being an educator may not have originally been their purpose, all of the participants expressed the work is purposeful.

Commitment

All of the participants interviewed for this study indicated that they are completely vested in their career choice with no desire to leave it. One teacher commented, “I don’t know what else I would do.” Another teacher considered his eligibility to retire and stated, “If I do retire, I would be to do something else with education.” One participant mentioned that if he leaves the profession, it would be to become a state politician so that he could have a greater effect on educational policymaking to benefit marginalized groups. One participant summed up his dedication to education in his comment, “If I don’t do it, who will?”

Devalued

The third theme found throughout the data centered around salary and being unappreciated. All of the participants commented on how the pay for teachers is not commensurate with the job requirements and, by extension, creates a feeling of being unappreciated. One of the administrators interviewed stated, “The salary is not comparable to all the things that you deal with. It may be a decent salary, but definitely, it's not comparable to what you're doing.” Another also mentioned, “I would increase the

teacher's salary to attract Black men because black men, being the head of the house, wants to be a provider. If he can financially provide for his family, then this profession may be more desirable." One teacher replied, "I think that if the starting salary was a little more competitive with some of the other industries, I think we may have more African American males. The majority of the participants noted that their salaries reflected being underappreciated. As one mentioned, "Teacher salaries reflect how unappreciated they are viewed in the general community." Similarly, another noted, "Low salaries reflect on low appreciation, at times."

In comparing teacher salaries to the median household income for the metropolitan areas the participants were selected from, only one of the six districts had salaries for teachers with master's degrees exceeding the median household income for the area. Likewise, only two of the districts possessed averaged teacher salaries exceeding the median household incomes for their metropolitan area. Furthermore, the difference between the median household income and the salaries for new teachers with only bachelor's degrees ranged from $16,000 less than to only $9 more than the average family living in that community. Provided in Table three is a complete list of the salary comparison.

Table 3

Teacher Salary Compare to Median Household Income

	Median H/H Income 2019	BS Only	Masters	Avg District Salaries 2019
Missouri	***	***	***	$50,010
D1	$43,893	$40,576	$43,281	$48,719
D2	$40,000	$40,009	$43,837	$60,752
D3	$61,274	$42,157	$46,478	$58,902
D4	$54,194	$40,500	$42,000	$53,430
D5	$54,194	$37,270	$41,093	$47,613
D6	$54,194	$37,646	$42,600	$53,234

The fact that all of the participants emphasized the importance of salary is echoed in prior research. Milanowski et al. (2009) found that "salary level does matter more in attracting new teachers to schools with a high proportion of students of color" (p. 6). Similarly, Shipp (1999) interviewed 263 African American college students to determine which factors were more important in their career selection process. The findings indicated that education majors were less concerned about their prospective salary; however, to the college students, the salary was the least attractive aspect of the career option.

Conclusions

Research Question One

Research question one focused on the reason for teaching being the career choice for these educators and to what extent race or other social factors played a role. Based on the responses provided in the interviews, it is suggested that race was not a factor, nonetheless, these participants did not have much if any interactions with an African-

American teacher during their k-12 education and did feel like outsiders in some educational settings due to the lack of role models. While the majority of participants noted that initially, education was not a calling, they all eventually realized through some event in their life that they loved working with children and wanted to have an impact on their future.

All of the participants indicated that they had positive experiences during elementary school and denied recalling any significant incidents of racism and discrimination. Participants spoke of isolated incidents in middle and high school, but there were no indications of systemic racism or discrimination detrimental enough for them to be dissuaded from becoming an educator. During their post-secondary education, though the participants acknowledged the isolation of being either one of the few or the only African American males in their teacher education program; that stated they endured microaggressions; and several encountered overt racism, the events were memorable, but the participants were not deterred from their goal of being educators.

In terms of any social factors impacting their decision to become educators, none of the participants indicated any negative encounters that may have impacted their decision to become an educator. All of the participants recognized the importance of their careers and expressed high levels of dedication. The only social factor the participants recognized as having an impact on their decision to become educators was the encouragement they received from their family and friends provided them the support to make the decision to pursue a career in education.

Research Question Two

The focus of this question was to determine how African American male

educators met the social and emotional needs of same-race, same-sex students to improve their educational experience. The data suggested the participants were often called upon to intercede on behalf of African American male students. Termed "overseers" by one of the administrators, participants recalled instances where some of their White colleagues, whom they considered to be culturally incompetent, deferred to the participants to administer discipline or to redirect African American males and other minority students. Some of the participants stated they resented being used in this fashion and felt as if their White counterparts should make an effort to develop the skills and relationships necessary to be proficient in this area. Other participants found it prudent to intervene to ensure students were treated fairly and did not receive excessive and unwarranted consequences.

As all of the participants stated, they consider being a role model and mentor for African American males one of the most important aspects of their jobs. Assuming the role of father figure for African American male students without a positive male role model in their life, participants maintain that they coach and guide their students to do the right thing. It is because of this guidance that the educators believe their presence mitigates negative perceptions of the efficacy and potential of African American students.

Research Question Three

The data suggested that there were several barriers to African American males becoming educators. When discussing the perceived barriers for potential African American male educators to enter the profession, the first barrier mentioned was salary. Given the debt associated with going to college to become an educator and the perceived lifestyle associated with earning a degree, a starting salary in the upper $30,000s to lower

$40,000s is foreboding to many African American males. Likewise, formidable salary increases are only achieved through earning advanced degrees and after working many years in the profession. Participants asserted teacher salaries are set at a range that excludes all but those who comfortably work for a lower salary, mainly White females whose salary is supplementary family income.

In addition to the low salaries associated with the profession, educators who discourage potential African American male educator candidates by propagating the narrative that "you do not want to be a teacher" are also a barrier to entry into the profession. The educators interviewed commented that besides the fact that the image of a successful African American male is not one who is a teacher, African American male students who have the aptitude and an interest in teaching are asked why would they want to teach when they could make more money doing something else. Students are turned away before being allowed the opportunity to consider the profession.

Perhaps the greatest barrier to entry for African American males seeking to be educators noted by the study's participants is the notable absence of African American males as teachers in urban schools. As mentioned by one of the participants, "we can't strive to be what we don't see." Those interviewed stated that not seeing African American males as educators removes teaching as a potential career choice. This self-replicating issue creates the paradox that there are only a few African American male educations because there are only a few African American male teachers.

Research Question Four

The suggests that participants did not experience racism or discrimination during elementary or middle school and maintained that it did not have a major impact on their

education. It is noteworthy that the majority of the participants attended neighborhood elementary and secondary schools that were predominately African American. Conversely, in high school, participants experienced isolated incidents of racism and discrimination, but at the post-secondary level, participants noted that microaggressions, overt racism, and discrimination were factors present in everyday life. One teacher expressed that "racism and discrimination are not variables to control for, but accepted constants that are always there." The educators' remarks suggest that the educators acknowledge the marginalizing factors of White normalcy and the constant struggle to persevere and not be deterred.

Research Question Five

From the data, it can be suggested that students were the reason that all of these African American educators have remained in the profession. Referring to their career choice as a calling or their purpose, those interviewees indicated that they had no intentions of leaving the profession and hoped to continue working as long as they were able. Disappointment in policies, salary, and being underappreciated was mentioned, but their dedication to their students and their craft was paramount. The educators' sentiment was summarized by one of the participants who replied, "If I don't do this, then who will?"

Research Question Six

To bolster future recruitment efforts, the participants suggested "grow your own" programs that introduce students to expose students to teaching and the possibility of being an educator as a career option. Programs such as Cadet Teaching and Future Teachers of America (FTA) were suggested as options to cultivate student interest in the

career field. One participant commented that these programs provide opportunities for those interested in teaching to experience aha moments, and “that’s the hook to get African American males interested in teaching.”

Administrators interviewed mentioned developing a relationship with their alma mater and with HBCUs to attract African American male educators to their districts. The hope is, by establishing a clear demand for graduates, more candidates will consider becoming education majors. Increasing the starting salary for teachers was the primary suggestion participants recommended to increase more African American males, but administrators also recommended providing incentives for graduates accepting positions in their districts, including signing bonuses, relocation expenses, tuition reimbursement, and housing.

Implications

This study provided information that contributes to the body of knowledge significant to the field of study of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools, including recommendations for school districts and suggestions for future research on the subject.

Significance to the Field of Study

The underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools is a well-documented phenomenon. Equally, as well documented, are the benefits to having African American male teachers to not only African American male students but all students, resulting in increases in academic achievement. Though educational policymakers have voiced their concerns about the underrepresentation and pledged their commitment to reversing the trend, little has been done to reverse it. A

concerted effort has to be made at all educational levels to prepare African American male students academically and to cultivate interest in the profession to take the necessary steps towards reversing the phenomenon.

The data has shown that current African American male educators persevere through perceived and actual barriers to entering the profession. Contending with low salaries and being underappreciated, the data revealed African American male educators are resilient and devoted to their careers and improving the lives of African American male students. Given the data have revealed longevity as a characteristic of African American male educators, signing bonuses and higher increase percentages could increase the presence of African American males in public urban schools.

The data further revealed that many African American male educators enter the profession through coaching. Likewise, coaches often supplement their incomes by accepting non-certificated positions such as paraprofessionals. When coupled with alternative certification programs, aspiring African American male educators can coach and fulfill the student teaching requirement of their teacher education program while still earning a salary as a teacher. The educator candidate will have also developed a relationship with the school, ensuring consideration for an open position if they become certified in it.

Recommendations For Schools

Boosting the presence of African American male educators in public urban schools has to begin with initiatives aimed at increasing African American male students' interest in the profession. The first recommendation would be to partner with local colleges and universities to establish a dual credit program. African American male

students, while attending their junior or senior year in high school, could attend a partnering college or institution, either free or at a reduced rate, for a teacher education program. The courses would be non-transferable but would count towards completing their degree at that university.

Another recommendation would be to develop a scholarship program that would pay for African American male students to complete their teacher education program, providing that they would work at the sponsoring school one year for every semester of financial support received. Students would be liable for the entire sum if they do not complete the program, decline to work in the school district, or have their contract non-renewed for poor performance or disciplinary reasons. Students could also be paid to complete their student teaching in the district as an added incentive.

A third recommendation would be to review the salary schedules and raise base salaries to 90% of the median household income for that metropolitan area. Higher salaries could entice more African American males to consider the profession. Likewise, districts could develop incentive plans for graduates of HBCUs in the state. These one-time incentives could include relocation expenses, delayed signing bonuses, and tuition reimbursement. When coupled with a competitive salary, this could be an effective means of attracting more African American males to the district and, perhaps, the profession.

Suggestions for Future Research

Though the centralized location for this study makes the findings less transferable, one recommendation for future research would be to increase the number of school districts and participants involved. Increasing the size of the study would allow for a

larger percentage of African American male educators in the state to be interviewed and provide more specific data on the phenomenon. Surrounding states could also be added to provide regional data.

Another recommendation for future research would be to gather qualitative data on the reasons why African American male education majors fail to complete the teacher training program. Understanding why students drop out of the program could provide valuable insight on how to increase the number of African American males entering the profession. Likewise, investigating the reasons why African American male teachers left the profession, if it is within the first five years, would also provide valuable information on retaining African American male educators and add to the body of knowledge on the subject.

Executive Summary

The following executive summary will be presented to the Human Resources Department of all participants within this inquiry. This executive summary outlined the main points in the dissertation study *An Examination of the Causes of Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators in Public Urban Schools.*

The problem of practice in this study is while the demographics for classrooms in urban communities have shifted to mirror the communities they are in, the teaching staff remains primarily White and Female. Although the primary purpose of the study was to investigate the factors that influenced current African American males to enter the profession, the study also sought to investigate any barriers that may hinder African American males from becoming educators and the reasons why African American males choose to remain in the profession. The research questions addressed by the study were:

1. What racial and social factors impacted the decision of African American male teachers to become a teacher?
2. How do male African American teachers perceive that their presence in PK-12 school settings can further mitigate negative perceptions of the efficacy and potential of African American students?
3. What do male African American teachers perceive as prevalent barriers to entry into the education profession, and how did they affect African American teachers' consideration of a career in education?
4. How do male African American teachers perceive race impacting African American male teachers' elementary, secondary, and preparation for post-secondary education?
5. Which factors contributed to the decision of African American males to remain in education or consider leaving the profession?
6. How can PK-16 educational leaders inform and implement strategies to bolster future recruitment of African American male educators?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to analyze qualitative data from African American male educators interviewed for this study was African American male theory. Also considered were critical Whiteness theory, critical race theory, and social justice theory, but all were considered too narrow in scope to frame the investigation for this study.

Methods

The study was conducted using qualitative methods utilizing interviews with

current African American male educators, data provided on district websites, and district reports derived from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website. The data were analyzed using open and axial to identify common themes throughout the data. The setting for the study included a total of six urban school districts, three each from large metropolitan areas on the east and west sides of the state of Missouri. Twenty-two virtual interviews were conducted across the six sites.

Results

Mentoring: The participants discussed the value of and how they benefited from having a mentor. Each educator wanted to pass this benefit along by being a mentor for African American male educators.

Coaching: Over half of the participants mentioned coaching as their gateway into education. These educators loved coaching and working with young people, but a coaching salary alone was not enough to pay bills. Therefore, the participants stated they were teaching so they could coach.

Inspiring and Encouraging: The educators all spoke of how they were inspired to be educators by a former teacher or mentor and encouraged by their family and friends. Inspiring and encouraging are essential traits for African American male educators in urban areas, needed to counter the trauma imposed on students by the poverty, high crime rates, and blight that plague most large urban communities.

Purpose: Twelve of the 22 African American male educators interviewed referred to teaching as their purpose or calling. Other teachers were more reluctant to enter the profession. Being an educator may not have originally been their purpose, but all of the participants expressed that the work is purposeful.

Commitment: All interviewees stated that they loved being an educator and had no desire to leave. The consensus among those interviewed was, “If I don’t, who will?”

Salary: All of the educators commented on how the pay for teachers is not commensurate with the job requirements. An analysis of the beginning salaries for new teachers revealed that they were as much as $16,000 below the median household income for the respective areas.

Discussion

Research Question One: Though all of the participants recalled isolated events in middle and high school, they affirmed that neither racism nor discrimination had impacted their decision to become educators. They mentioned encountering microaggressions and overt racism in college, but it was not enough to deter them from their goal to be an educator. The educators also stated that the only social factor impacting their decision to become an educator was the positive encouragement from family and friends.

Research Question Two: The participants mentioned being assigned to handle discipline for African American male students and serve as an “overseer.” Many of them resented the task, but others felt that it gave them the opportunity to ensure that African American male students were treated fairly. All of the participants indicated that through mentoring, they felt that they were able to mitigate negative perceptions of the efficacy and potential of African American students.

Research Question Three: The interviewees implied that salary was one of the primary barriers to African American males entering the profession, but a negative narrative about becoming a teacher and not seeing African American male teachers as

successful individuals were major barriers as well.

Research Question Four: Participants denied that race or discrimination had impacted their education, but the participants did state that racism and discrimination are not variables to control for but accepted constants that are always there.

Research Question Five: All of the participants stated that the students were the reason they have remained in the profession. Referring to their career choice as a calling or their purpose, those interviewees indicated that they had no intentions of leaving the profession and hoped to continue working as long as they were able.

Research Question Six: To bolster future recruitment efforts, the participants suggested "grow your own" programs that introduce students to expose students to teaching and the possibility of being an educator as a career option. Programs such as Cadet Teaching and Future Teachers of America (FTA) were suggested as options to cultivate student interest in the career field.

Implications

This study provided information that contributes to the body of knowledge significant to the field of study of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools, including recommendations for school districts and suggestions for future research on the subject.

Significance of the Study

Though educational policymakers have voiced their concerns about the underrepresentation and pledged their commitment to reversing the trend, little has been done to reverse it. Furthermore, African American males persevere through barriers to become educators and often find their way to the profession through coaching.

Recommendations for Schools

The first recommendation would be to partner with local colleges and universities to establish a dual credit program. African American male students, while attending their junior or senior year in high school, could attend a partnering college or institution, either free or at a reduced rate, for a teacher education program.

Another recommendation would be to develop a scholarship program that would pay for African American male students to complete their teacher education program, providing that they would work at the sponsoring school one year for every semester of financial support received.

A third recommendation would be to review the salary schedules and raise base salaries to 90% of the median household income for that metropolitan area. Likewise, districts could develop incentive plans for graduates of HBCUs in the state. These one-time incentives could include relocation expenses, delayed signing bonuses, and tuition reimbursement.

Suggestions for Future Research

One suggestion for future research would be to increase the size of the study to allow for a larger percentage of African American male educators in the state to be interviewed and provide more specific data on the phenomenon. Surrounding states could also be added to provide regional data.

Another recommendation for future research would be to gather qualitative data on the reasons why African American male education majors fail to complete the teacher training program in order to provide valuable insight on how to increase the number of African American males entering the profession.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF UNDERREPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE EDUCATORS IN PUBLIC URBAN SCHOOLS

Ernest J. Fields, Jr and Dr. Barbara N. Martin
University of Missouri

Abstract

While the demographic composition of classrooms is changing to reflect the cultural diversity of the communities' urban core, the vast majority of the teachers are White and female. Nationally, less than 2% of all public-school educators are African American males. This study examines the causes of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban public schools. The study's results were organized into three themes: mentoring, which was divided into coaching, inspiring, and encouraging; purpose regarding one's calling and commitment; and salary.

This study provided information that contributes to the body of knowledge significant to the field of study of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools, including recommendations for school districts and suggestions for future research on the subject. The study revealed the absence of African American male educators removes teaching as a potential career choice for African American male students. Boosting representation has to begin with initiatives to increase African American students' interest in the profession, increasing salaries, and incentives to attract new graduates.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the causes of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban public schools. Specifically, the investigation focused on the factors that influenced current African American males to enter the profession. Likewise, it examined barriers that may potentially hinder African American males from becoming educators. It also explored reasons that influenced current African American males to remain in the profession.
Although research (Brown, 2012; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015) findings have affirmed the benefits of African American male educators in urban settings, essential is more definitive information on how to increase representation. To understand this phenomenon, warranted is a clear understanding of what factors attract them to or deter them from the profession.

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What racial and social factors impacted the decision of African American male teachers to become a teacher?
2. How do male African American teachers perceive that their presence in PK-12 school settings can further mitigate negative perceptions of the efficacy and potential of African American students?
3. What do male African American teachers perceive as prevalent barriers to entry into the education profession, and how did they affect African American teachers' consideration of a career in education?
4. How do male African American teachers perceive race impacting African American male teachers' elementary, secondary, and preparation for post-secondary education?
5. Which factors contributed to the decision of African American males to remain in education or consider leaving the profession?
6. How can PK-16 educational leaders inform and implement strategies to bolster future recruitment of African American male educators?

The Setting

For this study, six urban school districts in Missouri, three from each side of the state. These districts were chosen from two of the largest districts in the state. Missouri was chosen because it is centrally located in the Midwest, making the findings more transferable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

CATEGORY	MO	Dist. 1	Dist. 2	Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6
Years	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Metro Population	***	2.8 mil	2.8 mil	2.8 mil	2.15 mil	2.15 mil	2.15 mil
City Population	***	300,576	20,525	34,165	495,327	495,327	495,327
Median H/H Income	***	$43,893	$40,000	$61,274	$54,194	$54,194	$54,194
Poverty Rate %	***	20.4	23.3	16.7	16.1	16.1	16.1
No. of Schools	***	68	23	7	33	10	7
Tot Enrollment	881,264	19,132	9,473	25	14	8,099	2,522
Black %	15.7	78.5	83	79.1	54	69.1	60.7
Hispanic %	6.7	5.7	3.6	4.6	28.4	13.3	9.8
White %	70.7	12.9	8.1	11.2	9.7	9.2	19
Dropout Rate							
Black %	3.4	7.5	3	5	6.4	2.2	2.8
Hispanic %	1.9	4.6	6.8	*	5.8	3.1	*
White %	0.9	3.6	2.3	6.6	5.5	9.8	*
F/R Lunch %	49.3	100	100	100	100	100	73.4

Participants and Data Collection

Dist. 1		Dist. 2		Dist. 3	
Position	Tenure	Position	Tenure	Position	Tenure
Dean (HS)	20	Principal (HS)	18	Principal (HS)	16
Principal (MS/HS)	40	IB Sci (HS)	20	Dean (HS)	13
Soc Stud (MS)	21			PE/Health (HS)	17
Math (MS)	11			Science (HS)	16
Dist. 4		**Dist. 5**		**Dist. 6**	
Position	Tenure	Position	Tenure	Position	Tenure
Principal (HS)	14	Principal (HS)	25	AP /AD (HS)	14
PE/Health (HS)	23	Principal (HS)	35	AP (HS)	17
Counselor (HS)	35	Soc Stud (HS)	30	PLTW (MS)	27
Choir (HS)	5	PE (HS)	18	8th Grade	5

The participants for this study were 12 current African American male certified staff educators employed by urban school districts as teachers or counselors and 10 African American administrators. Semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014), using predetermined questions but allowing for follow-up or clarifying questions, were the primary source of data collection. Due to time and travel constraints resulting from targeted districts being on opposite sides of the state and the pandemic of COVID 19, interviews were conducted using an online application that allowed virtual face-to-face interviews.

Data Analysis

Themes

Mentoring was one of the most prevalent themes throughout the data, and it could be divided into three sub-themes. The first of these themes was Coaching. Many of the participants spoke of getting into education because they wanted to coach and work with kids. For them, their coach was the African American male role model that made them believe in themselves. Their coach meant so much to them that they wanted to be that person for someone else. Coaching is time-consuming and is often referred to as a "B" salary position. As one participant said, "Coaching doesn't pay the bills," so these participants became educators so that they could coach.

Inspiring was another sub-theme of mentoring. Participants spoke of a time when an African American male educator either saw or helped them develop a skill. They commented about the respect and admiration for that teacher, how they wanted to do their best for them, and how they motivated them to enter the profession.

The third sub-theme was encouraging. Throughout the data, interviewees spoke of how important positive relationships were between African American male students and teachers, building trust, and establishing an environment where the students felt safe. As one of the administrators said, "Encourage them to do the right thing, and it will be okay."

Purpose and commitment were complementary themes that were evident within the data. Over half of the participants stated that being an educator was what they felt was their purpose in life. One 20-year teaching veteran stated he did know what he would do besides being an educator. What was truly important to note is none of the participants spoke of wanting to leave the profession. One administrator left briefly for another position, but he hated the job. The only place he felt fulfilled was being an educator. Even a 35-year teaching veteran stated he

would continue teaching and coaching as long as he was physically able.

Feeling devalued was another theme that emerged from the data. Educator salary was at the root of feeling under-appreciated. One of the participants alluded
that they didn't want to make it about the money, but they had bills to pay. The data reflected that these educators felt their low salaries reflected how they were devalued as educators by the district and the communities in which they worked.

Research Questions

The first research question guiding this study is "What racial and social factors impacted the decision of African American male teachers to become a teacher?" Based on participant responses, the race was not a factor in the decision process. They stated if they experienced racism in elementary school, they were too young to recognize it. However, from middle school throughout their educational career, they experienced everything from microaggressions to overt racism and discrimination, but none of them were deterred. The participants did not allude to any social factors impacting their decision to be educators except the encouragement they received for becoming an educator.

The second research question was "How do male African American teachers perceive that their presence in PK=12 school settings can further mitigate negative perceptions of the efficacy and potential of African American students." Some participants indicated they felt their position was to be an overseer for African American male students and were often called on to be a disciplinarian. Though most opposed being utilized in this fashion, others used their status to intercede on behalf of African American male students to ensure they were treated fairly. The participants also felt that being a role model for African American male students, positioned to be a father figure for students. They stated that just being present and pulling these young men aside and advising them did mitigate some of the negative perceptions about African American male students.

The Third research question guiding the study was What do male African American teachers perceive as prevalent barriers to entry into the education profession, and how did they affect African American teachers' consideration of a career in education? The first barrier identified by all of the participants was salary. Going into the profession knowing how much debt they went into to get the degree, the prospect of going into more debt to get another degree or waiting considerable amounts of time to work their way down the pay scale was identified as a true deterrent by the participants. Until you compare starting-salaries after earning a graduated degree to the median household income for their respective areas, that you see how salary is regarded as a barrier.

	Median H/H Income 2019	BS Only	Masters	Avg District Salaries 2019
Missouri	***	***	***	$50,010
D1	$43,893	$40,576	$43,281	$48,719
D2	$40,000	$40,009	$43,837	$60,752
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D5	$54,194	$37,270	$41,093	$47,613
D6	$54,194	$37,646	$42,600	$53,234

Some of the salaries are nearly $17,000 below the median household income, so having a second job is common among teachers. Another barrier identified is discouraging prospective teacher candidates by propagating only the negative aspects of being a teacher. Participants confessed to saying you don't want to be a teacher. Or you don't make money as a teacher. Suppose an African American male teacher is saying that to African American male students, it is dissuasive. The most impeding barrier is the absence of African American males in front of classrooms. Their absence suggests that this

is not a position for African American males, which establishes a paradox. There is are few African American male teachers because there are few African American male teachers.

The fourth research question was How do male African American teachers perceive race impacting African American male teachers' elementary, secondary, and preparation for post-secondary education. The data for this research question revealed that the only instance race impacted African American males' education was during the teacher education program. They experienced microaggressions and overt racism, and the difference in race was overly apparent. All participants highlighted the resilience of African American male educators by acknowledging the omnipresence of racism and discrimination but not allowing it to be a deterrent.

The fifth research question guiding this study was "Which factors contributed to the decision of African American males to remain in the education or consider leaving the profession?" As noted in the themes, interviewees referred to their profession as more than a job or a career, but a calling or a purpose. They spoke of having no intention of leaving the profession and loved working with young people.

The final research question for this study was "How can PK-16 educational leaders inform and implement strategies to bolster future recruitment of African American male educators?" The participants conveyed that one of the best strategies for bolstering recruitment is through grow-your-own programs. As one participant stated, getting prospective teacher candidates to experience that aha moment is the hook. It's addictive. The earlier prospective teachers experience the aha moment in the career decision-making process, the greater the odds of becoming educators. The interviewees spoke of forming relationships with their alma mater and HBCUs to recruit graduates. The thought was hiring from these organizations could create a sense that you were guaranteed a job, which could establish education as a preferred program of study for African American males. Again, the educators spoke of raising salaries to make the career field more appealing to African American males and provide incentives for graduates who complete the program.

Implications

The first implication is for institutions to make a concerted effort to cultivate interest in the profession among African American males by making their desire for diversity in race and gender part of their mission statement evident in all stages of the employment process, from recruitment through retirement. Most importantly, action steps need to be taken to make this a reality.

Another implication is to establish incentive programs for African American males to entice African American males to enter the profession, whether it is cash bonuses, moving or relocation expenses, or larger salaries. New steps have to be taken to increase interest in the profession among African American males.

Finally, since the prospect of coaching attracts a lot of African American males to the profession, capitalize on this as a way to recruit new teachers. Once they have been identified, these candidates can enter the program through an alternative certification program that would streamline the process for the individual to become an educator.

Recommendations

One recommendation would be for school districts to partner with local colleges or universities to establish a dual credit teacher education program for African American male high school juniors and seniors. Another recommendation would be to establish a scholarship program for African American male students that would pay for their tuition if they would return to work in the district. A final recommendation would be to raise new teacher salaries to 90% of the median household income for the area and incorporate employment incentives. A more enticing compensation package could be instrumental in increasing the representation of African American male educators

SECTION FIVE

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Title Page

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAUSES OF UNDERREPRESENTATION OF

AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE EDUCATORS IN PUBLIC URBAN SCHOOLS

By Ernest J. Fields, Jr and Dr. Barbara N. Martin

University of Missouri

Abstract

While the demographic composition of classrooms is changing to reflect the cultural diversity of the communities' urban core, the vast majority of the teachers are White and female. Nationally, less than 2% of all public-school educators are African American males. This study examines the causes of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban public schools. The study's results were organized into three themes: mentoring, which was divided into coaching, inspiring, and encouraging; purpose regarding one's calling and commitment; and salary.

This study provided information that contributes to the body of knowledge significant to the field of study of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools, including recommendations for school districts and suggestions for future research on the subject. The study revealed the absence of African American male educators removes teaching as a potential career choice for African American male students. Boosting representation has to begin with initiatives to increase African American students' interest in the profession, increasing salaries, and incentives to attract new graduates.

Keywords

Coaching, Inspiring, Encouraging Salaries, Purpose, *and Commitment.*

Introduction

Public urban schools are comprised primarily of African American and other minority male students, while the vast majority of the teachers are White females (Chung & Miller, 2011; Kennedy, 1991). Though there is a high demand for African American male teachers, not only in urban settings but education as a whole (J. W. Brown & Butty,

1999; Dinkins & Thomas, 2016; Pabon et al., 2011), recruitment efforts have failed to bolster the number of candidates entering the profession.

Nationally, less than 2% of all public school educators are African American males ("US Department of Education Launches National Teacher Recruitment Campaign," 2010). Studies have proven, the presence of African American male educators in schools has significant impacts on decreasing dropout rates and academic achievement among African American male students (Papageorge et al., 2017), but serving as mentors and role models are additional benefits realized. Consequently, school districts across the country are intensifying efforts to recruit African American male educators; however, the dilemma begins with the lack of candidates entering teacher education programs (J. W. Brown & Butty, 1999; Bryan & Williams, 2017; Milanowski et al., 2009; Pabon et al., 2011).

Examining contributing factors for the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools, this study focused on the lived experiences of current African American male educators from two large metropolitan areas in the Midwest to provide qualitative data to explicate this phenomenon. The following provides a description of the problem and the purpose of the study, includes answers to the research questions investigated, reviews the findings through the lens of African American Male Theory as the theoretical framework, and discusses the implication of the study

Problem of Practice

While research confirms the benefits of having African American male educators in public urban schools, little progress has been made in reversing the trend or the factors

creating them (A. L. Brown, 2012; Goldhaber et al., 2019; Stewart Jr et al., 2014). After decades of focusing on educator diversity, for the vast majority of African American male students, the individual charged with their education and academic achievement does not mirror their race, gender, and often, does not live in the same community as them (Allen, 2017; Miller & Harris, 2018). In many cases, these students see fewer than two African American male teachers, with the most representation being in non-certified roles, such as custodians and paraprofessionals (Graham & Erwin, 2011).

The prevalent social differences between students and teachers, coupled with a lack of cultural competency, racism, or discrimination, often result in conflicts between behavior and teacher expectations. Losen (2011) and Hotchkins (2016) noted African American male students are disciplined more frequently and with harsher punishments than their White counterparts. These excessive disciplinary practices often lead to negative school experiences, academic achievement deficits, and increased dropout rates. (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015; Bridgeland et al., 2006; Partelow et al., 2017; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Such barriers reduce the number of African American male students considering becoming teachers or even seeking post-secondary education.

At the post-secondary level, African American males from urban communities pursuing a degree in education are confronted with White normalcy. From the resulting culture shock, many African American male students are left feeling like they do not belong (Cook et al., 2018; Ellis et al., 2018). The feeling of being disconnected is often a result of or is amplified by microaggressions, overt racism, or discrimination, creating such a negative experience that some students drop out. Other African American male students find themselves ill-prepared for the academic rigor of post-secondary education.

Stemming from deficit thinking and low expectations, secondary teachers may reward positive behavior or compliance at the expense of a rigorous curriculum (Davis & Palmer, 2010; Gardner et al., 2014), resulting in the need for post-secondary remediation or academic suspension.

Students completing the teacher education program face additional barriers to becoming educators. Before certification, pre-service teachers must pass state-required content knowledge and pedagogy tests. Critics of standardized testing argue that such tests are biased and exclusionary. Sleeter's (2016) research revealed significant achievement gaps between African American and White pre-service teachers' scores. Goldhaber and Hansen (2010) also recognized a disproportionate fail rate for African American testers but concluded that it was not a result of a biased instrument. The findings from both studies suggest that state-required certification tests are practical tools for identifying highly qualified teachers (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Sleeter, 2016); however, such tests serve as another barrier for African American males to become educators.

Although literature and school districts express a need for African American male educators, the prevalent barriers and exclusionary practices suggest otherwise. What is unknown and requires further investigation is why African American males choose to pursue a career in education and what factors contribute to them remaining in the field. Likewise, there is a gap in the research providing qualitative data addressing this phenomenon.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the causes of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in urban public schools. It investigated the factors that influenced current African American males to enter the profession. Additionally, an investigation of barriers that may hinder African American males from becoming educators was conducted and finally examined reasons that influence current African American males to remain in the profession. Although research (A. L. Brown, 2012; Egalite et al., 2015) findings have affirmed the benefits of African American male educators in urban settings, essential is more definitive information on how to increase representation. A clear understanding of what factors attract them to or deter them from the profession is warranted to understand this phenomenon.

For this study, 12 African American male educators were interviewed from six urban school districts in Missouri, and their experiences with becoming an educator were documented. Ten urban public-school principals were also interviewed to document their strategies to recruit African American males to their districts. Their narratives were analyzed, outlining their individual or collective experiences of becoming educators, to identify factors contributing to the underrepresentation phenomenon. In conjunction with further research into the phenomenon, findings from this study should be used to influence recruiting practices and positively impact the representation of African American male educators in public urban schools.

Methods

A qualitative research design (Creswell, 2014) was used to gather data for this study. Currently employed African American male educators from large urban school

districts in Missouri were interviewed to examine the causes for the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools. Used was a transformative worldview approach that focused on the participants' lived experiences, which, through their narratives, qualitative data for the investigation was provided. This approach allowed the researcher to perceive "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Virtual, semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014) were conducted using a combination of predetermined, follow-up, and clarifying questions to generate the qualitative data for the study and provide insight into the causes of this phenomenon.

Study Setting

The setting for the study was six urban school districts in the state of Missouri. Since the state's two largest metropolitan areas are located on opposite ends, three districts were chosen from each location. Chosen was the state of Missouri because of its centralized location in the Midwest. The state's large urban school districts provided a larger population of African American male educators for the study. Furthermore, the districts selected were from areas that matched the stereotypical urban classification, with a combination of the African American and Hispanic populations exceeding 50% of the community's total population.

The student population for Missouri is 73.7% White, 16.6% African American, 5.2% Hispanic, and 4.5% mixed and other races, with the concentration of minority students in urban schools ("Missouri - Education Week," 2020). Over forty-eight percent of Missouri's students receive free or reduced lunches, with percentages being greater in

urban areas. Likewise, the graduation rate is considerably lower in urban districts ("Missouri - Education Week," 2020). Provided in Table 1 is the demographic breakdown of the districts used in the study.

Table 1

Metropolitan area and School District Demographics

CATEGORY	MO	Dist. 1	Dist. 2	Dist. 3	Dist. 4	Dist. 5	Dist. 6
Years	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**	**2019**
Area Population		2.8 mil	2.8 mil	2.8 mil	2.15 mil	2.15 mil	2.15 mil
City Population		300,576	20,525	34,165	495,327	495,327	495,327
Median H/H Income		$43,893	$40,000	$61,274	$54,194	$54,194	$54,194
Poverty Rate %		20.4	23.3	16.7	16.1	16.1	16.1
No. of Schools		68	23	7	33	10	7
Total Enrolled	881,264	19,222	9,473	25	14	5,099	2,522
Black %	15.7	78.5	83	79.1	54	69.1	60.7
Hispanic %	6.7	5.7	3.6	4.6	28.4	13.3	9.8
White %	70.7	12.9	8.1	11.2	9.7	9.2	19
Dropout Rates							
Black %	3.4	7.5	3	5	6.4	2.2	2.8
Hispanic %	1.9	4.6	6.8	*	5.8	3.1	*
White %	0.9	3.6	2.3	6.6	5.5	9.8	*
F/R Lunch %	49.3	100	100	100	100	100	73.4

Participants

Due to the limited presence of African American male educators in the profession, drawn from throughout the state to reach the level of sufficiency was the sample (Seidman, 2013) as recommended by Creswell (2014) for a phenomenological study. Due to the difficulty in obtaining participants, referrals for additional participants were obtained through the sampling process known as snowballing. Interviewed for this study were 12 African American male educators currently employed as teachers or counselors in urban school districts and 10 African American administrators from the

same districts. As a result of the extensive travel that would have been necessary for in-person interviews and the limitations caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, interviews were conducted virtually for all participants. An interview protocol (Appendix D) was used to ensure consistency (Creswell, 2014) during the interviews; however, clarifying and follow-up questions were also asked. Video recordings, audio recordings, and transcripts of the interviews were generated through the online application. The interviews were scheduled during times outside of the school day to avoid unnecessary disruption to the educational environment. Illustrated in Table 2 are the participants' positions and years as an educator.

Table 2

Participants' Position and Tenure

Dist. 1		Dist. 2		Dist. 3	
Position	**Tenure**	**Position**	**Tenure**	**Position**	**Tenure**
Dean (HS)	20	Principal (HS)	18	Principal (HS)	16
Principal (MS/HS)	40	IB Sci (HS)	20	Dean (HS)	13
Soc Stud (MS)	21			PE/Health (HS)	17
Math (MS)	11			Science (HS)	16
Dist. 4		**Dist. 5**		**Dist. 6**	
Position	**Tenure**	**Position**	**Tenure**	**Position**	**Tenure**
Principal (HS)	14	Principal (HS)	25	AP /AD (HS)	14
PE/Health (HS)	23	Principal (HS)	35	AP (HS)	17
Counselor (HS)	35	Soc Stud (HS)	30	PLTW (MS)	27
Choir (HS)	5	PE (HS)	18	5th Grade	5

Results and Discussion

Shared in this section are the study's findings, based on interview data, and a discussion regarding the degree to which the applied findings answered the research questions.

Data Analysis

After each interview, the videos and transcripts were reviewed in tandem to ensure the transcription application's accuracy and correct any errors. Interview data were reviewed a second time to redact identifiable information to protect the anonymity of the participant. Also, open coding was conducted to identify potentially important information for the study. During a final review of the data, axial coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was conducted to refine codes into themes common across the data. The themes identified were: Mentoring: *Coaching, Inspiring, and Encouraging;* Devalued: *Underpaid and unappreciated;* Purpose: *Calling and Commitment.* These themes will be revealed during the presentation of the data and discussed in the study's findings.

Question One

This study sought data pertaining to the question, *What do male African American teachers perceive as prevalent barriers to entry into the education profession, and how did they affect African American teachers' consideration of a career in education?* For this inquiry, the researcher considered the academic environment for African American male students from elementary through post-secondary education to reveal any social, racial, or gender biases that would pose barriers for candidates considering a career in education. Participants were first asked to reflect on their years in elementary and secondary public schools. Based on their experiences and how they were treated, they were asked if they would characterize public schools as a hostile learning environment for African American male students? The majority of the interviewees stated that they were supported and nurtured, especially in elementary and middle school. One participant stated:

> My elementary and secondary schools were structured, organized, and caring. I thought it was a great situation. I don't know if it was consciously or more subconsciously that I saw that you could do some great things as a teacher. I saw there were really good teachers and I had some really good teachers. I kind of said, okay, this is something that I can definitely do. I think that's just a subconscious bug that was in my head all the time.

One administrator alluded to teacher reactions to and perceptions of African American male students in his statement, “I think middle and high schools can be a hostile learning environment for African American male students, but I think you have to be able to look through the middle school behaviors to see the student's potential behind it.” Similarly, a teacher responded, “I wouldn't say urban public schools are hostile environments for African American male students, but they are definitely biased against them.” A high school choir teacher with only five years of teaching experience shared what he witnessed in his statement:

> I think one, it depends on the school, but I would say yes, it can be a hostile environment for African American males. I have seen with my own eyes. And I'll say even Black teachers assume more guilt or are quicker to take a hostile tone or to be quicker with slapping disciplinary sanctions on our Black males than on other students. I see it all the time.

The educators interviewed for this study were also asked to describe their teacher education programs in terms of race and gender, highlighting any racism or discrimination they may have encountered. Responses to this question would expose potential barriers faced by African American male teacher candidates and ultimately limit

their presence in public urban schools. The majority of the participants interviewed had attended Historically Black Colleges or Universities and reported, “I didn't experience any issues based on race or gender. I went to an HBCU, and it was my first time really being comfortable in an educational setting.” Another participant noted, “I was the only African American male graduate in my teacher education program,” while another mentioned,

> I was the only African American male in my cohort, so reality started to set in. People will ask, how come you don't have any black teachers in your school district, or how come you are not hiring any black teachers? I think the reality of that is, if there are none going into the profession, there are none to recruit or hire. So, the reality that I'm the only African American that is gonna come out of this program, I felt that I had to finish.

Similarly, a teacher stated, “There were a few African American males in my degree program, but not many. It was one of those things that the higher you go, the filter was on, so they got limited the higher I went.”

During the interview, participants were asked what reasons they would give for the underrepresentation of African America male teachers in public urban schools. A common throughout the responses was salary. One participant said:

> The money. Teaching is not a real lucrative profession. I think most of my friends never thought about being a teacher. They all do other things. None of them thought about being a teacher, and I think it is probably because of the money or because they don't have the patience to deal with younger teenagers other than their own.

One principal suggested that African American male students cannot aspire to be something they do not see, noting the absence of African American teachers in the classroom or being portrayed on television or movies. He maintained:

> One barrier to entering the teaching profession is it's not so is not a glamorous job. The perception is that educators don't make a lot of money. Secondly, so many of our African American males, while in middle school and high school, myself included, want to be some kind of entertainer, whether it's athletics, music producer, acting, and that's where we typically see black males. You know, when we turn on a TV and see black males in a positive light, they're either athletes, actors, comedians, or some kind of musician. I think that's what we see, so that's where we can insert ourselves. None of those professions lends themselves to trying to be an educator.

A participant who is a high school counselor replied:

> I think that the only reason a lot of Black males go into education is to coach. I just feel that the profession of teaching, in this day and age, doesn't appeal to students. It's too challenging. They understand the challenge that they had in high school, and I think it's because of the experiences that they had as students. Education doesn't seem like a very welcoming or promising profession for young men of color. I think a lot of that is based on their experiences. I think it has to do with its not appealing and because of the bad experiences.

One administrated referred to the time, money, and effort needed to become a teacher as he commented:

> I don't want to sit here and classify black men and the reasons why black men do

> not get into education, but I do strongly believe that it's because of the lack of financial means the field of education offers and even working your way up and going back to school, for some, is probably not very appealing because you have to go back to school and pay to become certified. I think that definitely plays a significant role in the lack of representation for Black men.

While salary may be the most prevalent reason African American males do not consider education as a possible career choice, one teacher suggests that there are underlying factors that are also deterrents. He maintains:

> Factors for the underrepresentation of African American male educators? Man, the web goes so deep. I mean, even when you go back to just the way that district lines are drawn. The way that schools are funded affects things like student performance recruitment. There are a lot of factors. Sometimes it's the rigor; in terms of general academics, a lot of times, the rigor of our is not what it should be. So, students get to college and realize this is a lot harder because they didn't learn certain habits in high school, and that hurts them a lot. Sometimes it's just not having the financial intelligence to be able to navigate the college admission process. You know, "My parents never went to college; they don't know how to help me out." A lot of times, the counselors are busy dealing with social-emotional issues with trauma, with discipline, with all these sorts of other things that they're not able to have these College and Career talks with students.

Question Two

Which factors contributed to the decision of African American males to remain in education or consider leaving the profession was another question being investigated for

this study. The researcher sought to understand the professional environment of the participants for reasons educators would seek to leave or remain in the profession. The first question participants were asked was if they had experienced any racism or discrimination from peers or administrators as African American male educators. The participants were then asked if they had ever considered leaving the profession. One administrator mentioned:

> I was the only black teacher in an all-white department that had their norms, culture, and ways of doing things. And I was this guy who was new to education and from a different background. So I wasn't really supported. And I wasn't really welcomed and embraced and had to really find my way on my own. Learn to my own bumps and bruises. It was challenging. But any instance of racism you can imagine, I mean, I've heard racist comments made by teachers, teachers not willing to work with me to share resources and leave me on my own to find my own way, disingenuous actions, and backstabbing. Questioning, once again, my intelligence, double-checking my work, asking students about the validity of my work. You know, insulting stuff. But I just had to find a way to persevere, and I grew from the experience, and I'm still here. And I've used those experiences to help mentor students with whom I have interacted.

When asked if he had considered leaving the profession, the administrator referenced a sense of duty and responded:

> I have thought about leaving the profession, but what has kept me here is a commitment to students and the mindset that if I don't, who will? Someone has to. And for students who are used to people leaving them or not being dependable or

> being able to count on anyone, not wanting to be or not wanting to contribute to that narrative in any way in the lives of our students. Yes, I've definitely had questions about remaining in the profession along the way, but the kids have kept me here. I love working with students. Not so much with the adults, but the students.

One participant stated that he had not seen or witnessed any racism or discrimination towards him as a professional. However, when asked if he had ever considered leaving the profession, the educator stated, “I don't get up and go to work. I go to my purpose. It's easy to go when you know you're going to your purpose.” I can’t fathom doing anything else.

Another teacher remembered his first day as a teacher in the district and how blatant the racism was towards him as an African American male. He disclosed:

> So my first day, fresh out of college, out of my master's program. We had come in for intruder training, and there happened to be a rope in one of the rooms. One of the teachers literally thought it was funny to put a noose around my neck. So, then we were sitting there doing the training, and I just happened to be sitting in the front. The trainer literally has ropes, and he slides them on my wrist to demonstrate how to deal with the intruder. But I'm like, why me?

The majority of the participants expressed not encountering racism or discrimination at work, but they also stated they love what they do and want to remain in the profession. One teacher commented, “I like what I do. It's been 11 years, but I'm not ready to leave yet.” Another teacher also said, “I haven't considered leaving the profession. I feel privileged and blessed that I have the opportunity to work with young

people, and I don't take that for granted." A principal conveyed a similar sentiment in his comments about leaving the profession, replying, "I've never seriously thought about going to another, another profession. I seriously can't see myself doing something outside of the field of education.

Question Three

The final question guiding this study was *How can PK-16 educational leaders inform and implement strategies to bolster future recruitment of African American male educators?* The purpose of this question was to identify what participants felt were characteristics of being an educator that could be improved to attract more African American males to the profession. One principal stated:

> The first thing I do is reach out to my alma mater to get a list of student teachers graduating in the fall and spring who are going to be certified. I call them personally and let them know that I'm interested in interviewing them. What I'm interviewing for is not content. If they are certified, that means you've done the coursework, and you've gone through the curriculum so they can teach math, teach art, or whatever it is. I'm looking for people that are going to be able to love kids. They are going to really invest and give 100% effort and come to work. That's what I'm investing in. And after that, I don't care about you being Black or White. The candidate that I need needs to come to work, give 100% effort, and love on kids. Just because you're Black doesn't mean that you're going to be the candidate, but it does mean I want to take a look at you. When it comes to recruitment, I would suggest being more aggressive with out-of-town groups and offering something like $1000 to $2,000 moving or signing bonus. Something to

> help with their move, especially if we're looking to recruit new students.that during the application review, “A lot of times, look at the names on the resumes and try to determine if it's possibly an African American male.”

Another principal suggested a similar approach to recruiting African American males to the profession. He commented,

> To get more African American males into the profession, I think school districts need to visit more HBCUs, and I think they need to have some type of incentive. Maybe that's a bonus, a travel or relocation bonus or something like that. I think that would lure a lot of black males into a particular district and kind of talk about the demographics of the school district. And to me, the most important part is to send Black recruiters down there to get some of those scholars who are graduating.

Discussion

The following paragraphs contain a discussion of the findings and answers to the research questions as they pertain to the themes and sub-themes identified in the qualitative data. The themes identified were: Mentoring: *Coaching, Inspiring and Encouraging;* Purpose: *Calling and Commitment.* Devalued: *Underpaid and unappreciated.*

Mentoring

The first theme was mentoring, which was divided into coaching, inspiring and encouraging. This study has revealed that mentorship is an essential part of being an educator for the mentor and the mentee. Many of the participants indicated that they had a mentor who encouraged them to become an educator. Most of these mentors were

former teachers, as with the principal whose English teacher stated that she thought he would be a good teacher or the physical education teacher whose professor thought he would be a great educator as an African American male. As one interviewee recalled, others were colleagues who urged him not to settle for being a paraprofessional but to go back to school and get his degree. These reflections correspond with Dinkins and Thomas' (2016) research asserting that educators who are mentors inspire others to be educators by “providing an example they wanted to replicate” (p. 30).

Having benefited from having a mentor, all participants named being a mentor one of the most important aspects of their job as an educator (El-Mekki, 2018; Goings & Bianco, 2016). They also maintained that having a strong, positive, African American male role model is what African American male students need most in urban school settings. All of the educators interviewed stressed the importance of developing positive relationships with their students and how “looking like them” made it easier for them to relate to them. Three of the participants, who were principals, commented on how they dress professionally to provide an example of a successful African American male. Another principal spoke of greeting students and being a “cheerleader for them” to provide the encouraging interaction they would receive from a father. The educators also spoke of the absence of father figures in many African American families in urban communities. The participants’ commitment to their African American male students suggests a sense of duty to “show them how to be men” (Bianco et al., 2011, p. 379).

Coaching

Over half of the participants interviewed stated that they got into education because they wanted to coach. A teacher interviewed commented, “I love coaching and

working with kids, but the only way to do that at the high school level is to teach." Likewise, another teacher responded, "I loved coaching, but I had bills to pay. I got into teaching as a way to do both." In their research regarding social studies teachers being required to coach as a stipulation for employment, Conner and Haeussler (2021) defined coaching contingency as "the need to coach in order to be hired to teach" (p.2). Conversely, the educators interviewed defined their experiences as a need to teach in order to coach, emphasizing the desire to coach over becoming an educator. Reflecting on how sports provided valuable life lessons, such as teamwork, commitment, and perseverance, for them in their youth, the educators strive to teach the same life lessons to African American males in the classroom and on the field.

Inspiring and Encouragement

The interviewees all spoke of someone who inspired to be educators or encouraged them to enter the profession. Whether it was an English teacher who saw past the rambunctious middle schooler to discover a gift of writing; a football coach who encouraged his former player to use his knowledge and expertise as an athlete to help other African American males to excel in the sport, or following in the footsteps of parents; all of the participants reflected on the how an African American male educator was instrumental in their success as educators. As a result, participants spoke of being role models or presenting themselves as individuals their students would want to emulate.

Purpose

The second theme was mentoring, which was divided into calling and commitment. Of the 22 teachers and administrators interviewed, 12 of them spoke of becoming an educator as a calling or a career they were predestined to do. A principal

stated that he was a product of a family of educators, so he knew it was what he was going to do." One teacher replied, "I whole-heartedly believe being an educator is what God put me on this earth to do." Another educator was inspired to switch his major to education during the last semester of this degree program after hearing the story of a destitute young girl and how she had to do to provide for her younger brother and herself. Others spoke of how their love of working with young people through coaching sports drew them to the profession. One educator spoke of being an educator as "going to my purposes every morning. It's not work if it is your purpose." Shipp (1999) identified educators' purpose as their contribution to society and found it to be the leading factor for African American males to enter the field of education.

Commitment

All of the participants interviewed for this study indicated that they are completely vested in their career choice with no desire to leave it. One teacher commented, "I don't know what else I would do." Another teacher considered his eligibility to retire and stated, "If I do retire, I would be to do something else with education." One participant mentioned that if he leaves the profession, it would be to become a state politician to have a greater effect on educational policymaking to benefit marginalized groups. One participant summed up his dedication to education in his comment, "If I don't do it, who will?"

Devalued

The third theme found throughout the data centered around salary and being unappreciated. All of the participants commented on how the pay for teachers is not commensurate with the job requirements and, by extension, creates a feeling of being

unappreciated. One of the administrators interviewed stated, “The salary is not comparable to all the things that you deal with. It may be a decent salary, but definitely, it's not comparable to what you're doing.” Another also mentioned, “I would increase the teacher’s salary to attract Black men because black men, being the head of the house, wants to be a provider. If he can financially provide for his family, then this profession may be more desirable.” One teacher replied, “I think that if the starting salary was a little more competitive with some of the other industries, I think we may have more African American males. The majority of the participants noted that their salaries reflected being underappreciated. As one mentioned, “Teacher salaries reflect how unappreciated they are viewed in the general community.” Similarly, another noted, “Low salaries reflect on low appreciation, at times.”

In comparing teacher salaries to the median household income for the metropolitan areas the participants were selected from, only one of the six districts had salaries for teachers with master's degrees exceeding the median household income for the area. Likewise, only two districts possessed averaged teacher salaries exceeding the median household incomes for their metropolitan area. Furthermore, the difference between the median household income and the salaries for new teachers with only bachelor's degrees ranged from $16,000 less than to only $9 more than the average family living in that community. Provided in Table three is a complete list of the salary comparison.

Table 3

Teacher Salary Compare to Median Household Income

	Median H/H Income 2019	BS Only	Masters	Avg District Salaries 2019
Missouri	***	***	***	$50,010
D1	$43,893	$40,576	$43,281	$48,719
D2	$40,000	$40,009	$43,837	$60,752
D3	$61,274	$42,157	$46,478	$58,902
D4	$54,194	$40,500	$42,000	$53,430
D5	$54,194	$37,270	$41,093	$47,613
D6	$54,194	$37,646	$42,600	$53,234

The fact that all of the participants emphasized the importance of salary is echoed in prior research. Milanowski et al. (2009) found that "salary level does matter more in attracting new teachers to schools with a high proportion of students of color" (p. 6). Similarly, Shipp (1999) interviewed 263 African American college students to determine which factors were more important in their career selection process. The findings indicated that education majors were less concerned about their prospective salary; however, the salary was the least attractive aspect of the career option to the college students.

Conclusions

The data suggested that there were several barriers to African American males becoming educators. When discussing the perceived barriers for potential African American male educators to enter the profession, the first barrier mentioned was salary. Given the debt associated with attending college to become an educator and the perceived lifestyle associated with earning a degree, a starting salary in the upper $30,000s to lower

$40,000s is foreboding to many African American males. Likewise, formidable salary increases are only achieved by earning advanced degrees and working many years in the profession. Participants asserted teacher salaries are set at a range that excludes all but those who comfortably work for a lower salary, mainly White females whose salary is supplementary family income.

Perhaps the greatest barrier to entry for African American males seeking to be educators noted by the study's participants is the notable absence of African American males as teachers in urban schools. As mentioned by one of the participants, "we can't strive to be what we don't see." Those interviewed stated that not seeing African American males as educators removes teaching as a potential career choice. This self-replicating issue creates the paradox that there are only a few African American male educations because there are only a few African American male teachers.

From the data, it can be suggested that students were why these African American educators have remained in the profession. Referring to their career choice as a calling or their purpose, those interviewees indicated that they had no intentions of leaving the profession and hoped to continue working as long as they were able. Disappointment in policies, salary, and being underappreciated was mentioned, but their dedication to their students and their craft was paramount. One of the participants summarized the educators' sentiment who replied, "If I don't do this, then who will?"

To bolster future recruitment efforts, the participants suggested "grow your own" programs that introduce students to teaching and the possibility of being an educator as a career option. Programs such as Cadet Teaching and Future Teachers of America (FTA) were suggested as options to cultivate student interest in the career field. One participant

commented that these programs provide opportunities for those interested in teaching to experience aha moments, and “that’s the hook to get African American males interested in teaching.”

Administrators interviewed mentioned developing a relationship with their alma mater and with HBCUs to attract African American male educators to their districts. The hope is, by establishing a clear demand for graduates, more candidates will consider becoming education majors. Increasing the starting salary for teachers was the primary suggestion participants recommended to increase more African American males. Still, administrators also recommended providing incentives for graduates accepting positions in their districts, including signing bonuses, relocation expenses, tuition reimbursement, and housing.

Implications

This study provided information that contributes to the body of knowledge significant to the field of study of the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools, including recommendations for school districts and suggestions for future research on the subject.

Significance to the Field of Study

The underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools is a well-documented phenomenon. Equally documented are the benefits of having African American male teachers for all students, resulting in increases in academic achievement. Though educational policymakers have voiced their concerns about the underrepresentation and pledged their commitment to reversing the trend, little has been done to reverse it. A concerted effort has to be made at all educational levels to

prepare African American male students academically and cultivate interest in the profession to take the necessary steps towards reversing the phenomenon.

The data has shown that current African American male educators persevere through perceived and actual barriers to entering the profession. Contending with low salaries and being underappreciated, the data revealed African American male educators are resilient and devoted to their careers and improving the lives of African American male students. Given the data have revealed longevity as a characteristic of African American male educators, signing bonuses and higher increase percentages could increase the presence of African American males in public urban schools.

The data further revealed that many African American male educators enter the profession through coaching. Likewise, coaches often supplement their incomes by accepting non-certificated positions such as paraprofessionals. When coupled with alternative certification programs, aspiring African American male educators can coach and fulfill the student teaching requirement of their teacher education program while still earning a salary as a teacher. The educator candidate will have also developed a relationship with the school, ensuring consideration for an open position if they become certified.

Recommendations For Schools

Boosting the presence of African American male educators in public urban schools has to begin with initiatives aimed at increasing African American male students' interest in the profession. The first recommendation would be to partner with local colleges and universities to establish a dual credit program. While attending their junior or senior year in high school, African American male students could attend a partnering

college or institution, either free or at a reduced rate, for a teacher education program. The courses would be non-transferable but would count towards completing their degree at that university.

Another recommendation would be to develop a scholarship program that would pay for African American male students to complete their teacher education program, providing that they would work at the sponsoring school one year for every semester of financial support received. Students would be liable for the entire sum if they do not complete the program, decline to work in the school district, or have their contract non-renewed for poor performance or disciplinary reasons. Students could also be paid to complete their student teaching in the district as an added incentive.

A third recommendation would be to review the salary schedules and raise base salaries to 90% of the median household income for that metropolitan area. Higher salaries could entice more African American males to consider the profession. Likewise, districts could develop incentive plans for graduates of HBCUs in the state. These one-time incentives could include relocation expenses, delayed signing bonuses, and tuition reimbursement. When coupled with a competitive salary, this could effectively attract more African American males to the district and, perhaps, the profession.

Suggestions for Future Research

Though the centralized location for this study makes the findings less transferable, one recommendation for future research would be to increase the number of school districts and participants involved. Increasing the size of the study would allow for a larger percentage of African American male educators in the state to be interviewed and provide more specific data on the phenomenon. Surrounding states could also be added

to provide regional data.

Another recommendation for future research would be to gather qualitative data on why African American male education majors fail to complete the teacher training program. Understanding why students drop out of the program could provide valuable insight into increasing the number of African American males entering the profession. Likewise, investigating why African American male teachers left the profession, if it is within the first five years, would also provide valuable information on retaining African American male educators and add to the body of knowledge on the subject.

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SECTION SIX

SCHOLARLY PRACTIONER REFLECTION

One may view my educational resume and believe that I have taken the adage "life-long learner" to heart. After earning a bachelor's degree and three master's degrees, I jokingly stated that I was not going to learn anything else. Not knowing that only having a Master of Science in Educational Leadership instead of an Education Specialist degree meant that I would have to have continuing education in order to maintain my administrative certification meant that I would have to pursue another degree. A fourth master's degree did not seem to make sense, so I began my quest to earn my Educational Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis.

Shortly after I applied for the program, I was not sure that I would be admitted. A former superintendent for a district that I used to work for commented that I would be admitted because I was Black. I wanted to be admitted based on merit and not because of my race. Once I received notice that I had been admitted, I was not sure that I belonged. The superintendent's words continued to resonate with me. I was reminded that the first time I went to the University of Missouri, I technically flunked out and was allowed to continue under contact. Now I had the opportunity to prove that I was deserving of this chance and that I belonged in the program now. Just as I told the Dean then, "I will not leave here without that piece of paper."

Pursuing my EdD has been the most difficult thing that I have done. I felt challenged, empowered, and enlightened all at the same time. The individuals that I was partnered with during summers one and two and the cohort that I worked with at the University of Central Missouri became more than colleagues and more like family. We battled the wicked problem, we learned the eight-fold method of policy analysis, and we endured to complete dissertations and complete the program. I am forever changed by

this experience and forever a part of the history and culture of the ELPA program and cohort 11. What an honor!

After completing the program and earning my doctorate, the resounding question is, "What now?" My educational journey does not end here. My plan is to use the knowledge and skills gained through this program to be critical of policies and procedures, analyze them to ensure that they benefit students, and promote academic achievement and the quest to add to the body of collective knowledge. I also plan to fully embrace the concept of life-long learning and continue to learn and grow academically. Being the first male in my family to earn a bachelor's degree but the only person in my family to earn an advanced degree, I want to show my children that anything is possible if they put their minds to it. Just like the participants in the study, I plan to inspire.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Columbia
FWA Number: 00002876
IRB Registration Numbers: 00000731, 00009014

482 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
573-882-3181
irb@missouri.edu

January 25, 2021

Principal Investigator: Ernest J. Fields (MU-Student)
Department: Educational Leadership-EDD

Your IRB Application to project entitled An Examination of the Causes of Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators in Public Urban Schools was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2043922
IRB Review Number	294706
Initial Application Approval Date	January 25, 2021
IRB Expiration Date	January 25, 2022
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Exempt
Exempt Categories (Revised Common Rule)	45 CFR 46.104d(2)(ii)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
Approved Documents	This is the email script that will be sent to teachers. This document is the interview protocol with the verbal consent included.

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. **COVID-19 Specific Information**
   Enrollment and study related procedures must remain in compliance with the University of Missouri regulations related to interaction with human participants following guidance at research.missouri.edu/about/covid-19-info.php
   In addition, any restarting of in-person research activities must comply with the policies and guiding principles provided at research.missouri.edu/about/research-restart.php, including appropriate approvals for return to work authorization for individuals as well as human subject research projects.
2. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
3. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation utilizing the Exempt Amendment Form.
4. The Annual Exempt Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date to keep the study active or to close it.
5. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.

If you are offering subject payments and would like more information about research participant payments, please click here to view the MU Business Policy and Procedure: http://bppm.missouri.edu/chapter2/2_250.html

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the MU IRB Office at 573-882-3181 or email to muresearchirb@missouri.edu.

Thank you,
MU Institutional Review Board

Appendix B

Gatekeeper Permission for Administrator and Educator Participation

I, ____, grant permission for administrators and educators within our district's high school to be contacted to participate in the study, *An Examination of the Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators in Public Urban Schools* conducted by Ernest Fields, a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri.
By signing this permission form, I understand that the following safeguards are in place to protect faculty choosing to participate:

- All participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any point before the conclusion of the study.
- All responses will be used for dissertation research and potential future journal publications.
- All identities will be kept confidential in all phases of the research.
- Interviews will occur with each volunteering participant via videoconference and will last approximately one hour in length. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded to identify common themes in the lived experiences of African American male educators.
- The information gathered would provide schools and districts with valuable insight into recruiting and retaining African American male educators.
- There is no cost to the district to be a part of this study and may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Please keep the consent letter and a copy of the signed consent form for your records. If you choose to grant permission for educators in your school district to participate in this study, please complete this *Administrative Permission for Program Participation Form*

and return it to Ernest Fields as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Ernest Fields via email at ejfields@mail.missouri.edu or the faculty advisor Dr. Barbara Martin at bmartin@ucm.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research or concerns about the study, or if you feel under any pressure to enroll or to continue to participate in this study, you may contact the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board (which is a group of people who review the research studies to protect participants' rights) at (573) 882-9585 or umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu.

I have read the material above, and any questions I may have had have been answered to my satisfaction. I grant permission for administrators and educators in my program to be contacted and invited to participate in this study.

Signed: ____ Date:___________________

Title/Position: ____

Contact Information:

Phone ______________________________(circle one) WORK HOME CELL

Please return to: Ernest Fields, 619 Seaton Blvd. Raymore, MO 64083
Cell Phone: 816-799-5246 **Email:** ejfields@mail.missouri.edu

Appendix C

Informed Consent from Interview Participant

I, ____, agree to participate in the study *An Examination of the Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators in Public Urban Schools* conducted by Ernest Fields, a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I understand the following:

- My participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any point before the culmination of the study.
- My responses will be used for dissertation research and potential future journal publications.
- My identity will be kept confidential in all phases of the research.
- An interview will occur either in-person or via video conference at a mutually agreed upon time, lasting approximately one hour in length.

Please keep the consent letter and a copy of the signed consent form for your records. If you choose to participate in this study, please complete the attached **signed consent form,** seal it in the enclosed envelope, and return it to Ernest Fields as soon as possible. ***Please be sure and include contact information so interview plans can be made and communicated to you.***

I have read the material above, and any questions that I have posted have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signed: ______________________________________ Date: ______________________

Title/Position: ____

Contact Information:

Phone ______________________________(circle one) WORK HOME CELL

Best time for contact: ____

E-mail:____ ____________________

Please return to Ernest Fields, 619 Seaton Blvd. Raymore, MO 64083
Cell Phone: 816-799-5246 **Email:** ejfields@mail.missouri.edu

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Participant:	
Date/Time:	

Questions	**Research Questions Addressed:**
Introduction: 2 minutes	
[Researcher]: Good (morning, afternoon, evening). I want to thank you for meeting with me today. My name is Ernest Fields and before we get started, do you mind if I make a record and audio recording of this interview? As I stated, my name is Ernest Fields, and I am a doctoral student attending the University of Missouri's Cooperative EdD program through a partnership with the University of Central Missouri. The purpose of this study is to investigate the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public urban schools. The findings of this study may reveal contributing factors to this phenomenon and provide insight into methods for reversing it. To accomplish this, I will need to ask you some questions. I will be working from a scripted list of questions, but I may ask follow-up questions if necessary. If there are points you would like to expand on, please feel free to do so. If, at any point, you need to take a break or would like to stop the interview, please let me know. Do you have any questions for me at this time? Shall we begin?	
Opening Questions: 4 minutes	
1. How long have you been an educator?	Learn about participant
2. How many years have you worked at this high school?	Learn about participant
3. What courses do you teach?	Learn about participant
4. Was education your first career?	Learn about participant
Key Questions: 25-30 minutes	
5. Have you always wanted to be an educator? • If yes, what made you want to be an educator? • If not, what factors led to you becoming an educator?	Q1, Q3

6. As an African American male, when you were considering entering the profession, were you encouraged or discouraged to become an educator?	Q1, Q3, Q4
7. Has race impacted your education at any point from elementary through post-secondary school? How so?	Q4
8. Were there any barriers (racial or social) you faced while pursuing a career in education?	Q1, Q3
9. After finishing your education, how did you get your first position? Did you seek employment, or were you recruited?	Q3, Q6
10. Have you witnessed or had to intervene in matters concerning White teachers and African American male students?	Q1, Q2
11. Have you experienced any racism or discrimination from peers or administrators as an African American male educator?	Q1, Q5
12. Other than being an educator, what roles do you fulfill because of your race and gender?	Q2, Q5
13. Do you feel that your gender and race have been a factor in your success/failure as an educator?	Q2
14. What reasons would you give for the underrepresentation of African American male educators?	Q1, Q3
15. Have you ever considered leaving the profession? • If so, what contributing factors were the basis for your consideration? • If not, what factors have contributed to your desire to remain in the profession?	Q5
Administrator Question	
* What protocols do the building and district have to address possible disparities in disciplining African American male students?	Q4. Q2
* What steps have been taken at the building and district levels to recruit African American male educators actively?	Q4, Q5, Q6
Ending Question	
16. Is there any information about your experience as an African American male educator that you feel is important for me to know for this study?	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4 Q5 Q6
Closing: 1 minute	
Those are all of the questions that I have for you at this time. I appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me. Enjoy the rest of your day.	

Appendix E
Document Review Form

Name of Document ____

Document # ____

Date Procured ____

Document Received From ____

Notes:

VITA

Ernest Fields is a Missouri native, born in St. Louis on November 8, 1970, but lived in Clarksdale, MS, with his mother and brother from 1973 until 1981. He is the son of Ernest Sr. and Maude Mae Fields, both from Clarksdale, MS. Ernest attended Southwest high school in St. Louis and graduated in 1988. He was accepted to the University of Missouri - Columbia, where he earned a bachelor's of science in hotel/restaurant management in 1993. Ernest continued on to earn a master's of business administration (M.B.A.) from the University of Phoenix in 2004, a master's of art in teaching (M.A.T.) from the University of Central Missouri in 2008, a master' of science (M.S.) in educational leadership from Pittsburg State University in 2013, and an educational doctorate (Ed.D.) in educational leadership and policy analysis from the University Of Missouri – Columbia in 2021.

Ernest worked for 18 years in the foodservice industry, where he briefly owned and operated a café before deciding to change careers and become an educator. In 2005, he applied to be a long-term middle school substitute teacher for the Grandview C-4 School District, and after witnessing his first "aha" moment, he knew that this was what he wanted to do. Ernest started his degree program, became alternatively certified as a high business teacher, and taught at Grandview high school for nine years before becoming an administrator in 2014. Ernest is in his eighth year as an assistant principal and currently works at Ruskin high school in the Hickman Mills C-1 School district in Kansas City, MO.