

Pathways to the Classroom for African American Males

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Findlay's College of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2023

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Abstract

Only two percent of teachers in the United States are African American males (Wallace & Gagen, 2019). If this trend continues, the vast majority of students in America will never encounter an African American male teacher (Burns Thomas, 2020). The purpose of this research study was to explore the motivations and obstacles that African American males encounter as they enter the teaching profession. This qualitative study consisted of interviewing eight African American male educators regarding their motivations and obstacles on their journey to the classroom. Participants were asked open ended questions to afford them an opportunity to share their lived experiences. A narrative analysis was conducted of participants' interviews. The major findings of this study revealed that African American males are motivated to become teachers by family, by wanting to become role models, as an extension of coaching, and through the influence of teachers throughout their educational experience. Participants shared that lacking a support system, not pursuing rigorous college preparatory coursework, and isolation and exclusion were major obstacles they had to overcome. This study suggest that stakeholders have to be intentional in the recruitment and support of potential African American male teachers. Stakeholders can use the information gained from this study to create policies, provide academic and financial supports, and mentoring opportunities that are tailored to the recruitment of African American male teachers.

Key Words: male, African American, teacher, recruitment

Dedication

First, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to God for blessing me with the intelligence, opportunity, perseverance, and support needed to complete this journey. This dissertation is an example of how God is teaching and using me to make this world a better place. Next, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother Mary Ann Horton who is my greatest role model. Without her love, example, and encouragement, I would not be the man that I am today. In addition, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my siblings for their continued love and support throughout my life. Although not a sibling by blood, I want to also dedicate this dissertation to my best friend James Longwell. I would be remiss if I did not dedicate this dissertation to my maternal grandmother for her love, strength, and wisdom. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to all of my students and colleagues who have made me a better man and educator.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not have come to fruition without the support of my dissertation committee. To Dr. Diana Garlough, thank you for chairing my committee. Your encouragement and wisdom throughout this journey have been invaluable. My methodologists, Dr. Amanda Ochsner, has been with me since the first semester of doctoral study. Thank you for your encouragement and valuable feedback from day one. Last but not least, thank you Dr. Theodore Caleris for your friendship, encouragement, and support throughout this journey and my career. In addition to my committee members, there are countless educators that I have had along the way that I dedicate this dissertation to including but not limited to Mrs. Barbara Ambler, Mrs. JoAnn Grau, Mrs. Dawn Neely-Randall, and Dr. Teresa Rishel to name a few.

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Chapter I. Introduction

Background of the Problem

As the student population of America's schools increasingly becomes more diverse, the opposite is true of its teaching workforce (Burns Thomas, 2020; Clemson University, 2022). The majority of teachers in the United States are white females. Many students will never experience having a teacher of color in their PreK-12 school experience. African American male teachers are practically nonexistent in classrooms in the United States. According to Wallace and Gagen (2019), less than two percent of America's teachers are African American men. African American men make up around six percent of the United States population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). In a country as diverse as the United States of America, students need to see educators that reflect the diversity of its citizens (Cormier, 2020).

African Americans and the Teaching Profession

Although it seems contrary to reason, the U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. The Board of Education*, had a devastating effect on African American male teachers (Lynn, 2018). Prior to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision desegregating public schools in 1954, African American men were well represented in the teaching profession. Of the eighty-two thousand African American teachers prior to *Brown*, about half of them were African American men (Saddler, 2005). Teaching was viewed as a respectable middle-class profession for both African American men and women. Due to discriminatory housing and employment practices, African American teachers lived in the same segregated neighborhoods as their students as distinguished members of the community. With the enforcement of court ordered desegregation measures such as busing, one of the consequences was the termination of many African American teachers when their schools closed. Further decimating the number of

African American male teachers was that many white suburban districts did not see a need to hire African American teachers. As a result, many African American teachers had to leave the teaching profession (Kunjufu, 2002; Saddler, 2005; Wallace & Gagen, 2019). With the Civil Rights Movement and passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, more opportunities in various professions became open to African Americans, particularly African American men. Due in part to affirmative action programs, many African Americans were recruited into more lucrative careers than teaching which overall was a good thing (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010). As a result, the number of African American men entering the teaching profession has continually declined since the mid-1960s.

African Americans started entering the middle class as a result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other civil rights victories such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Redlining, a policy by which banks would deny mortgages in predominately African American neighborhoods, was outlawed allowing some African Americans to venture out of African American neighborhoods into white suburbs. One of the reasons for this shift was to provide an opportunity for their children to receive a quality education. Some African American parents struggled with issues dealing with racism as their children transitioned to attending predominantly white schools (Duncan, 2018). Many of these problems still exist to this day. Researcher John Ogbu wrote about this in his landmark study *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement* (2009) that detailed the suburb of Shaker Heights, Ohio and how middle class and affluent African American students continue to struggle in suburban schools.

When schools had yet to become desegregated, African American teachers had the opportunity to guide their students through the segregated and unequal educational system in the

United States and taught them how to successfully navigate racism and discrimination. The absence of African American teachers, especially males, left a void not only for African American students in the urban city centers, but also those in the suburbs that continues to this day (Brown, 2018). The Brown decision has perpetuated a school system that is nearly as segregated as before the decision (Pabon, 2016). Noted researchers such as Gloria Ladson-Billings believe that efforts to recruit African American males must be combined with the practice of all teachers using culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2009). This ensures that every educator has the knowledge needed to teach diverse populations of students. Many studies have highlighted the achievement gap that exists between African American, Asian American and White students in America (Kunjufu, 2002; Noguera, 2009). Although *Brown v. The Board of Education* is hailed as one of the most monumental rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court, it can be argued that its goal was not accomplished in regard to reversing the “separate but equal” doctrine of the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision (Saddler, 2005).

After the Brown decision, some southern states resisted efforts to desegregate their schools. “By 1958, only seven states-Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana-maintained public-school segregation” (Douglas et al., 2004). Some governors and politicians used scare tactics such as white females being fetishized by black males to rally support for maintaining segregation. Social unrest was so heightened that President Eisenhower had to call in the National Guard in some states to enforce desegregation orders (Kelly, 2009). Over sixty years have passed since nine African American students desegregated Little Rock Central High School under federal protection due to local and state resistance to integration (Corrigan, 2018). Famous desegregation efforts such as Arkansas’ Little Rock Nine among others serve as reminders of the struggle to ensure a quality education for all students.

Socio-Political Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education

Although the aforementioned cases happened in the 1950s, opponents of Brown and desegregation efforts have continued over the decades expanding to colleges and the workforce (Douglas et al., 2004). Policies such as the use of affirmative action in colleges and the workforce have been under attack for over fifty years. Critics argue that policies such as affirmative action violate the “equal protection” clause of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Researchers such as Delgado, Stefancic, and Harris (2017) point out that white women benefit the most from affirmative action policies in colleges and employment. This fact proves that whites have benefitted from civil rights legislation. The United States Supreme Court has upheld the validity of affirmative action as one among many ways to increase diversity in society. As the makeup of the U.S. Supreme Court changes, diversity policies such as affirmative action remain vulnerable.

African American Male Teacher Recruitment in the Twenty-First Century

Researchers, politicians, universities, and school districts are increasingly realizing the importance of ensuring America’s teaching workforce is more diverse (Burns Thomas, 2020; Carothers et al., 2019; Hensell & Fiano, 2018; Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2020). More than seventy percent of African American children are being raised in single parent homes, so the need for African American male role models and mentors is crucial (McDougal et al., 2018). African American male teachers serving as role models extends beyond minority schools (Bristol, 2017). Schools in rural, urban, and suburban communities need to hire men of color, particularly African American men, that value education. This will help combat the dominant narrative in the media that the only successful African American men are athletes or entertainers (Lynn, 2018; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010).

Critical Race Theory can be used to frame research in ways that help researchers understand how race not only impacts the outcome of students' educational experiences in America, but also who chooses to teach future generations of learners (David-Sandles, 2020; Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). There is a need for mentors and role educators that reflect the diversity of the country and students being taught in America's classrooms. Brown (2012) points out that African American male teachers must be careful not to be stereotyped into a one-dimensional role of only being seen as connecting to African American students due to shared race and culture. Like all quality teachers, there is a mixture of personality, passion, caring, and competence that garners respect and being designated a role model by students (Brockenbrough, 2014). Generations of Americans have not had African American male teachers during their formative years. This makes the call of African American males into classrooms go unheard by many.

The state of Ohio has focused on its recruitment of African American male teachers in recent years. Close to 17 percent of students in the state of Ohio are African American. Eight percent of Ohio's teachers are African American. Less than one percent of teachers in Ohio's classrooms are African American men (Diversifying the teacher workforce in Ohio, 2019). Some colleges and universities have initiatives such as Ohio University's Brothers Rise program that seeks to recruit African American male college students to pursue the teaching profession (Ohio University, 2020). One of the major barriers to African American males becoming teachers is the passage of teacher education entry exams such as the Praxis (Burns-Thomas, 2020; Wallace & Gagen, 2019)). Due to the inequality of America's educational system, some African American males interested in teaching are not academically prepared for collegiate work. Having to take remedial courses often delays entry into teacher preparation programs and causes a financial

burden to African American students (Burns Thomas, 2020). While teacher education programs have a role to play, some researchers believe that universities should not be the first place advocates look to increase the number of African American male teachers.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

According to the report *Diversifying the Teacher Workforce in Ohio* (2019), in the state of Ohio, African American male teachers make up less than one percent of the teaching workforce. This is alarming because 16.8% of students in Ohio schools are African American. Without intentional recruitment efforts and teaching culturally relevant pedagogy to all educators, a lack of cultural competence can prevent students from receiving a quality education. There is a plethora of literature in regard to teacher recruitment; however, the literature focusing on the recruitment of African American male teachers is limited. Policies and programs will not be successful until policymakers and researchers, who are typically white, involve African American male teachers in sharing their stories and recommendations in regard to improving the number of African American males becoming teachers (Goings, 2015; Jones & Nichols, 2013; Pease, 2021).

Accordingly, this research study focused on African American male teachers in Northeast Ohio. It is the hope of the researcher that the findings and recommendations can be applied anywhere there are efforts to recruit African American male teachers. Researchers such as Burns Thomas (2020) and Brockenbrough (2014) have started the work of understanding the motivations and obstacles to becoming an African American male teacher. This research study expands on their research by providing school districts with data and practical solutions as extrapolated from the voices of African American male teachers.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivations and obstacles that African American males face while becoming teachers and add their voices to the current research. With less than one percent of Ohio's teachers being African American men, the recruitment pipeline must be improved to ensure every district has an opportunity to recruit quality African American male educators. Using interviews, the researcher met with eight African American male teachers of varying experience and at various grade levels to share their lived experiences becoming teachers while examining the motivations and obstacles on their journey. The intended outcome of this study was to provide knowledge that will enable stakeholders to improve the recruitment of African American males into the teaching profession.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was the theoretical framework used in this research study. With its roots in the legal field, CRT seeks to examine the relationship between race and power in institutions in society (Bell, 1987). For the purposes of this study, CRT was used as a lens to examine the educational system of the United States, specifically in regard to the relationship between African Americans and its educational system. In recent years, CRT has become politicized by people in positions of power. Some argue that CRT's objective is to shame whites for injustices in society and unearned privileges. CRT is not a racial curriculum or philosophy; instead, it is a theoretical framework used to examine race and power in societal institutions (Bell, 1987; Delgado et al., 2017; Douglas et al., 2004; Saddler, 2005).

Attorney Derrick Bell proposed Critical Race Theory in the 1970s as a result of being frustrated with the slow progress of racial reform since the Civil Rights Movement. Critical Race Theorists believe that racism is at the foundation upon which society in the United States is

structured, and it maintains racism is a constant societal feature. Critical Race Theory has several tenets. These tenets include: (1) the social construction of race; (2) racism is ordinary; (3) interest convergence; (4) storytelling and counter-storytelling; and (5) whites have been recipients of Civil Rights legislation (Bell, 1987).

When race determines one's position in society, CRT refers to this as the social construction of race. Two examples of the United States government using race as a criterion to deny African Americans rights afforded to other citizens were the Social Security Act and the Federal GI Bill (Pease, 2021). When Social Security was established in 1935, the vast majority of African Americans were excluded from receiving the benefit due to being domestic and agricultural workers (Poole, 2006). The Social Security Act of 1935 excluded from coverage about half the workers in the American economy. President Roosevelt knew that he could not get Congress to pass the Social Security Act without the support of Southern Democrats who refused to support any legislation that benefited African Americans (Poole, 2006).

In 1944, the United States Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (GI Bill). Similar to the Social Security Act, although African Americans were not specifically excluded from participating in the program benefitting World War II veterans, Southern Democrats would only pass the legislation if states could implement the program (Herbold, 1994). As a result, southern states prevented African American servicemen from benefitting from the educational and loan opportunities that millions of other citizens of the United States used to create generational wealth (Herbold, 1994).

Another tenet of CRT is that racism is ordinary. Words such as meritocracy and color-blindness are used by the dominant culture to allow whites to feel consciously irresponsible for

the hardships people of color face and maintain power within society (Sandles, 2020). Students are subjected to a Eurocentric curriculum in their preK-12 schooling that teaches all students that whites control the United States due to their achievements (Delgado et al., 2017; Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995). Representation of other racial and cultural groups are mostly subservient such as African American history starting with slavery in the United States. Racism is normalized by excluding accurate representations of all Americans and their contributions to this country (Sandles, 2020).

In addition to the social construction of race and racism being ordinary, another tenet of CRT is interest convergence. Interest convergence is the notion that whites will allow and support racial progress to the extent that there is something positive in it for them (Bell, 1987). *Brown v. Board of Education* is an example of interest convergence. While *Brown* ended *Plessy's* (1896) "separate but equal" ruling which in theory afforded African Americans access to better educational opportunities, the *Brown* decision also benefitted whites by sending a message to the world that America was addressing inequalities among its citizens. However, the enforcement of *Brown* was not a priority throughout the country. As a result, sixty years after the passage of *Brown*, schools in the U.S. are as segregated as they were prior to *Brown* (Bell, 1987; Burns, 2020; Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017; Kelly, 2009).

The fourth tenet of CRT is that whites have been recipients of civil rights legislation which is contrary to common belief. Whether it was the *Brown* decision or affirmative action among other civil rights legislation, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue that white flight has created schools in which few white students attend schools where they are the minority and benefit from the ways schools are funded using property taxes. In addition, Delgado, Stefancic and Harris (2017) point out that white women benefit the most from affirmative action in regard

to college enrollment and employment. The dominant narrative in society regarding African American progress or lack of do not always align with reality (Saddler, 2005).

While each tenet has played a role in the experiences of the study's participants, this research study focused on the CRT tenet of Counter-Storytelling. Counter-Storytelling consists of providing marginalized groups an opportunity to share their experiences and values with the larger society (Goings, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The researcher used the counter-storytelling tenet of Critical Race Theory to provide participants an opportunity to tell their stories of becoming a teacher. Knowing the power of the dominant narrative of how one becomes a teacher, the researcher wanted to ensure the lived experiences of these African American male teachers was a part of the literature. Solorzano & Yosso (2002) explain counter-storytelling as a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told. The participants' contribution to the literature in regard to their respective pathways into teaching will ensure their counter stories are shared with researchers, universities, and school district officials with the hope of increasing the number of African American male teachers in the United States.

To understand why the number of African American males in education is limited, it is important to understand the role that integration played impacting African American teachers. The integration of African Americans and Whites into U.S. society is often hailed as one of its biggest achievements. Americans can live, worship, and work anywhere in the country. What is often not discussed is that integration was detrimental to many aspects of African American life, especially for African American educators (Saddler, 2005). A consequence of desegregation efforts was that African American educators lost their jobs due to many white school districts refusing to hire them (Saddler, 2005). Many African American students were left to learn in a

majority white environment where there was racial hostility and a lack of cultural competence. In order to improve America's educational system, educators, researchers and other stakeholders must hear how learning in a majority white environment has impacted African Americans (Miller & Endo, 2005).

Because it is important for participants to tell their own story, this study uses Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) wrote "discussions of race and racism continue to be muted and marginalized" (p. 47). As mentioned earlier in this study, there is a plethora of literature in regard to the recruitment and retention of teachers (Reitman & Karge, 2019). The literature is lacking in regard to giving African American male teachers a voice regarding what led them to teaching and the barriers they faced. Critical Race Theory provides a framework for the researcher to look at the motivations and obstacles that African American male teachers encountered as they entered the teaching profession from the lens of how race and racism impact people of color.

Research Questions

1. What motivates African American males to become teachers?
2. What obstacles are faced by African American males in the process of becoming teachers?
3. How can teacher preparation programs prepare African American males to become successful teachers?

Definition of Terms

*Term 1. **Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas***: In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in this case desegregated public schools in America based on the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Prior to this ruling, in 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson was the law of the land

that stated that “separate but equal” was constitutional. As a result of this case, various measures have been employed to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to receive a quality education (Saddler, 2005).

*Term 2. **Critical Race Theory**:* A theoretical framework used to research the relationship between race, racism and power. At its core is the belief that racism and its consequences are woven into society. Attorney Derrick Bell proposed Critical Race Theory as a result of being frustrated with the slow progress of racial reform after the Civil Rights Movement. Critical Race Theory consists of five tenets: 1) the notion that racism is ordinary; 2) the idea of an interest convergence; 3) the social construction of race; 4) the idea of storytelling and counter-storytelling; and 5) the notion that whites have been recipients of civil rights legislation (Bell, 1987; Delgado et al., 2017, pp. 2-4; Saddler, 2005; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

*Term 3. **Praxis Tests**:* “The Praxis tests measure the academic skills and subject-specific content knowledge needed for teaching. The Praxis tests are taken by individuals entering the teaching profession as part of the certification process required by many states and professional licensing organizations” (Educational Testing Service, 2020). The state of Ohio uses the Ohio Assessments for Educators (OAE) for most initial educational licenses. The OAEs “consists of specialized assessments for prospective educators based on their licensure area/grade level and license type” (Teacher certification.com, 2022, para. 1).

*Term 4. **Cultural Competence**:* According to the National Education Association, Cultural competence “is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than their own” (NEA, 2008). With the increasing diversity of students in the United States, educators must become culturally competent in regard to understanding the cultures of others and incorporating them into their teaching practices. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is a theoretical model that

“focuses on multiple aspects of student achievement and supports students to uphold their cultural identities” (Ladson Billings, 2009, p.39).

*Term 5. **White Savior Syndrome:*** “The White Savior Syndrome constructs people of color as lacking the capacity to seek change and thus become perceived as disposed of historical agency assigning power exclusively to the White figure, a construction that is both condescending and historically inaccurate” (Camarota, 2011, p. 246).

*Term 6. **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy:*** “Gloria Ladson-Billings introduced the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* to describe a form of teaching that calls for engaging learners whose experiences and cultures are traditionally excluded from mainstream settings” (New America, 2020, para.3).

Subjectivity & Researcher Positionality

As an African American male educator, I looked forward to hearing from other African American male teachers regarding the motivations and obstacles that they encountered becoming teachers. Knowing that every educator has different motivations and potential barriers to entering the profession, it was interesting to see the similarities and differences between the participants. I have been an educator for over seventeen years in Ohio in both urban and suburban districts. Currently, I am a principal in Rocky River, Ohio. Prior to going into administration, I was a 5th and 8th grade Language Arts teacher in Northeast Ohio. I attended predominately white institutions for all of my postsecondary education. I received my undergraduate degree in Middle Childhood Education from Kent State University. My master's degree was in Educational Administration from Ashland University. In addition, I have also completed my Superintendent's licensure from Cleveland State University. As an African American male educator, I realized there was the potential for bias concerning my “lived experience” regarding the recruitment of

African American male teachers. I intentionally made my study a qualitative study because I wanted to hear of the “lived experiences” of other African American male teachers.

Chapter II. Literature Review

Need for African American Male Teachers

With less than two percent of America's teachers being African American males, the vast majority of students in the United States will never encounter an African American male teacher in their PreK-12 schooling experience (Wallace & Gagen, 2019). America is becoming a more diverse country every year. In fact, there are several states such as Texas, California and Florida that are already majority minority in regard to their population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Research has proven that teacher quality is the number one indicator of student achievement (Reitman & Karge, 2019). America needs high quality teachers in its classrooms; however, school districts must be intentional about ensuring that the high quality educators hired reflect the diversity of its students and communities (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011; Bristol, 2017; Brown, 2012; Cormier, 2020; Goings & Bianco, 2016).

When it comes to African American males in America, there are not a lot of positive images and role models for students, especially if they come from single parent households. America's media often stereotypes African American males as criminals, athletes, or entertainers. Johnson and Migliacco (2009) conducted a study in which they interviewed seventeen African American boys and their parents in order to examine the reasons the boys participated in sports. The researchers concluded that many African American parents viewed sports as an avenue out of poverty. In addition, the boys believed that sports were the only means to a successful life. When African American students do not see African American males who are professionals or upstanding citizens in their communities, it is easy to see that they would not readily consider a career in education or outside of the realm of professional athlete (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Students having African American male teachers helps break down stereotypes

that have permeated U.S. society. Studies show that all students benefit from having diverse teachers regardless of their race or socioeconomic background. One especially important response of students who are minorities or come from economically disadvantaged experiences is that they more likely to attend college and perform academically better when taught by teachers of diverse backgrounds (Burns Thomas, 2020; Lynn, 2018; Miller & Endo, 2005).

In addition to serving as role models and mentors, African American male teachers also bring diverse perspectives that are needed when making policy and curriculum decisions. Researchers such as Gloria Ladson-Billings have argued that school districts must make cultural competence a priority to ensure students feel welcomed and valued in schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Often whites, especially white males, are in leadership positions whether in district central offices or education legislative committees that do not have shared experiences with those impacted by their policy and curriculum decisions. Research is starting to bring to light that for some African Americans, this is insulting because their input was never considered as policy and curriculum decisions were being made (Bristol, 2017; Burns Thomas, 2020). America has a history of adopting the “I know what is best for you” edict, particularly aimed at marginalized groups in America. Cammarota (2011) writes about how the “I know what is best for you” edict is derived from the White Savior Syndrome. “The White Savior Syndrome constructs people of color as lacking the capacity to seek change and thus become perceived as disposed of historical agency assigning power exclusively to the White figure, a construction that is both condescending and historically inaccurate” (p. 246).

There is substantial literature regarding the need to recruit African American male teachers. However, the literature is limited in providing recommendations to increase the number of African American male teachers. The recommendations need to focus on both internal and

external factors that play a role in increasing the number of African American male teachers. Motivation to become a teacher is an example of an internal factor to pursuing teaching as a career. An external factor would be the lack of collegiate support systems that help African American male teaching candidates navigate the credentialing process. The literature tends to focus on external factors that play a role in increasing the number of African American male teachers (Hudson, 2017). There is a need to give “voice” to the internal factors that lead or prevent African American males from becoming teachers. In addition, the literature does not afford African American males many opportunities to share their pathways into teaching.

The literature review is divided into three areas concerning the recruitment of African American male teachers. The first section deals with motivations of African American males to enter the teaching profession. The second section of the literature review focuses on the educational system and its impact on African American males. The final section of this literature review addresses recruitment recommendations of African American males for universities and school districts.

Motivations and Challenges

Why do African American males go into the teaching profession? Research shows that African American males enter the teaching profession for the same reasons other racial groups enter the teaching profession: love of working with students, passion for their subject area, wanting to be a role model, and understanding the importance of developing lifelong learners (Brown, 2012). Due to negative personal experiences in the educational system, the United States loses many potentially great educators of color (Goings & Bianco, 2016). A message that is being sent to African American students, especially males, when they do not encounter

African American male teachers is teaching is not a profession they should consider (Goings, 2015).

Boswell (2010) conducted a study to understand why African American males chose to enter the preK-12 teaching profession. The participants of this study lived in Alabama and were members of an African American Greek Fraternity. Using Grounded theory, twelve participants were asked interview questions pertaining to why they chose teaching as a career. According to Maxwell (2013), Grounded theory "...is "grounded" in the actual data collected, in contrast to theory that is developed conceptually and then simply tested against empirical data" (p. 49). Three major themes were found from Boswell's study. The first theme was participants noticed throughout their schooling the limited number of African American male teachers. In fact, some participants never had an African American teacher in their preK-12 schooling. The second theme was that many chose teaching due to familial influence or passion for a subject area. Some of the participants had parents that were educators. The third theme from the study was that participants indicated there did not appear to be much being done to encourage African American males to become teachers. Participants mentioned highlighting the positive aspects of the profession such as being a role model, job stability, and a pension among other positive attributes of the profession.

For those African American males who do become teachers, some do not believe they are valued for their abilities and perspectives; instead, they are relegated to being "disciplinarians" (Brockenbrough, 2014). They are often given the most challenging students to "develop relationships" with instead of being provided an opportunity to display their talents as educators for all students. As a result, many African American male teachers either leave the profession after a few years out of frustration or are encouraged to pursue educational administration

(Brown, 2012). While it is good for all students, especially African American males, and other stakeholders to see African American males in leadership positions; both options result in African American males not interacting with students in classrooms on a daily basis.

Brown (2012) points out that African American male teachers understand that they are role models and mentors. With over seventy-percent of African American children being born to single parent households, African American male teachers are the only African American males some students encounter. McDougal (2018) explains that many African American teachers are viewed as “social fathers” to many of their students. This is a great responsibility that African American male teachers do not take lightly. Being a mentor is not only exclusive to African American students, but also for non-minority suburban and rural students as well. As mentioned earlier, for many students, the only images of African American males they are exposed to are athletes, criminals or entertainers. African American male teachers counter that narrative. Until African American males are exposed to the plethora of career opportunities, including teaching, that are available to them, society will not benefit from the potential of these students (Goings & Bianco, 2016).

Along with being mentors for students, research shows that many African American males enter the teaching profession because they have seen so many of their family, friends, and peers suffer and become casualties of the educational system in America. Brady (2008) conducted interviews with African American male teachers from Georgia to understand their attraction to teaching. Six African American male elementary teachers who had taught for at least five years were included in this study. Participants were asked twenty questions regarding their attraction to the teaching profession. The study concluded that the experiences of participants and their family and friends was the third highest reason for entering the profession.

Wanting to be a role model and wanting to explore another career field (five of the six participants transitioned from another career) were the top two reasons respectively (Brandy, 2008).

African American male teachers must be encouraged to stay in the classroom and be supported as professionals, especially as novice teachers (Bianco et al., 2011; Brookenbrough, 2014; Brown, 2012; Cormier, 2020; Goings & Bianco, 2016; Goings, 2015; Lynn, 2018; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010; McDougal et al., 2018). One of the main reasons that novice teachers leave the profession is due to the lack of professional support. Novice teachers should not be left alone to navigate the transition to the classroom. Research shows that novice teachers benefit from mentorship from experienced educators. Watkins adds, “Mentoring novice teachers is commonly accepted as an effective method of initiating and retaining novice teachers to the profession” (Watkins, 2005, p.84). Without effective mentors to help novice teachers, they can become isolated from the learning community that exists in schools (Bristol, 2017).

Besides effective mentoring, novice teachers also leave the profession due to a lack of autonomy (Watkins, 2005). Novice teachers need to discover who they are as educators. Mentors and professional development can provide a wealth of knowledge in regard to pedagogy and building relationships with students and colleagues, but it is up to novice teachers to define who they are as teachers. They need to learn how to use their personality and experiences as valuable resources (Duncan, 2018). The road to becoming a successful teacher starts when novice teachers are encouraged to be themselves. Novice teachers do not have to imitate their mentors, but must be willing to learn and apply valuable lessons learned along the way. Effective mentorship and autonomy are two obstacles African American males encounter early in their career (Duncan, 2018; Watkins, 2005). Schools are seen as places where students are

prepared to reach their full potential; however, schools must also be seen as fertile ground for educators to reach their full potential as well (Burns Thomas, 2020; Jones & Nichols, 2013; Reitman & Karge, 2019).

Many African American students do not have positive school experiences (Pabon, 2016). African American students make up a higher percentage of students identified as students with disabilities, have higher suspension rates and dropout rates among students in the United States of America (Cormier, 2020). For decades, researchers have been studying how some of America's most at-risk students lose their enthusiasm for school as they get older. It is important to make the distinction between losing enthusiasm for school as compared to losing enthusiasm to learn. Researchers such as Gallagher and Lippard (2014) note that many African American students who come from a different cultural background than their teachers, who are often white middle class women, will sometimes develop a rebellious counterculture in school. Fiske and Markus (2012) further explain that some African American students reject the belief that education leads to success; instead, seek success from other opportunities in the workforce. Conforming to middle class norms associated with American schools is seen as "acting white" (Noguera, 2009). Schools in the United States are based on white middle class norms such as structure, independence, and compliance among other tenets. African American students who assimilate to these norms are not always seen as being authentically black by their black peers, but are viewed as wanting to "brown nose" to whites (Fiske & Markus; 2012; Noguera, 2009). This is not to say that these students have given up on learning, but have become disengaged with America's system of learning. In addition, many of the African American students, especially males, do not have role models and mentors that look like them to counter this disengagement (Ogbu, 2009).

African American Males and Teacher Preparation Programs

Wallace and Gagen (2019) conducted a study focusing on barriers, motivations and supports necessary for African American males to graduate from teacher education programs. Their research advocates for starting as early as middle school to introduce teaching as a potential career for students, especially African American males. According to a study by Miller and Endo (2005), it is recommended that districts provide an exploratory elective course in either middle school or high school that provides a holistic approach to the teaching profession. Miller and Endo's study consisted of eight participants that were from a large Midwestern public university. All of the participants were undergraduate students of color in the teacher education program. Three of the participants identified themselves as Asian, three as Latin Americans, and two as African Americans. Participants were recruited by referrals from college instructors in general undergraduate education courses. An eight question open-ended questionnaire was distributed to participants. Follow up interviews were conducted to seek clarification or additional information from the answers to the survey (Miller & Endo, 2005). One of the findings of the study was that having previous teaching experiences may play a role in deciding to become a teacher. Participants mentioned having the opportunity to be tutors in high school, to work as camp counselors, or in other extracurricular activities in which having opportunities to teach were available played a role in pursuing education as a career. (p.7). In light of the findings of Miller and Endo (2005), one way to address the widespread loss of novice teachers within their first five years of service is for students interested in pursuing teaching as a career to have opportunities to understand what teaching entails (Watkins, 2005).

Along with providing exploratory clubs or electives for African American males to help them determine if they are interested in teaching, various research studies recommend that

African American male students are encouraged to take rigorous college preparatory courses. Hines et. al (2020) designed a program where school counselors would introduce the eight components of college readiness to African American male high school sophomores using a group counseling approach with the goal of improving college readiness. The program consisted of five fifty minute sessions in which college planning was discussed with students. The second session focused on students learning how to “align their high school courses with their career aspirations and college major” (p.134). The researchers explained the concerns that some African American males have taking college preparatory courses “which is usually associated with the lack of representation of African American males within these courses and the expectations of school staff” (p. 134). The program showed that African American males learning about the college preparatory path with other African American peers lead to more open conversations and support for enrolling in more rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement courses during the school year (Hines et. al., 2020).

Some studies indicate that as many as forty percent of entering college freshmen are taking remedial courses, particularly in English and mathematics (Saddler, 2005). According to Hensel and Fiano (2018), “around 90 percent of lower-income students who are the first in their family to attend college do not graduate within six years” (p.2). Not only does having to take remedial courses delay graduation, but they are also an additional financial burden that many students cannot afford (Bianco et al., 2011; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010). African American students have the highest student loan debt of any racial group in America. Having to pay for courses that do not count towards graduation definitely serves as a deterrent for African American male college students (Wallace & Gagen, 2019).

While the lack of college preparation is a challenge, Clemson University in South Carolina offers some solutions that are designed to increase the number of African American male teachers in the state's public schools. The Call Me MISTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) program was developed in 2000 by Clemson University professor Dr. Roy Jones. According to the program's website, "The mission of the Call Me MISTER initiative is to increase the pool of available teachers from a broader more diverse background particularly among the state's lowest performing elementary schools. Student participants are largely selected from among underserved, socio-economically disadvantaged and educationally at-risk communities" (Clemson University, 2022). The program is seen as a model of collaboration between universities and school districts to increase the number of African American male teachers. Media outlets such as ABC World News, the Oprah Winfrey Network and social media platforms have produced segments on the program and its success (Clemson University, 2022).

African American males interested in becoming a MISTER have to complete a rigorous application and interview process. If chosen to participate in the program, students are provided with tuition assistance through forgivable loans, access to an academic support system, a cohort system for social and cultural support and assistance with job placement (Clemson University, 2022). Upon graduation from the program and becoming a licensed teacher in their respective state, MISTERS are required to teach at an elementary school for every year that they received financial assistance. The program has become so successful that it has expanded to ten states and over seventeen participating universities throughout the United States. The program continues to thrive due to not only the collaboration between universities and school districts, but also

financial support from corporate sponsors such as the Boeing Company and Wells Fargo among others (Clemson University, 2022).

Understanding the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders to increase the number of African American males entering the teaching profession, the Ohio Department of Education started the Diversifying the Education Profession in Ohio Taskforce in 2019. Members of the taskforce were asked to develop recommendations based on national, state and local data to improve recruitment of minority teachers. Recommendations by the taskforce were submitted to both the Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Higher Education for review. One of the recommendations by the taskforce was to focus on attracting individuals to the profession by implementing programs such Educators Rising Ohio which seeks to cultivate "...a new generation of highly skilled educators by guiding young people on a path from high school into college preparation programs. By working with aspiring educators who reflect the demographics of their communities and who are passionate about serving those communities through public education... (About Educators Rising Ohio, 2015). Educator Rising started in 2015 by the PDK Education Foundation and the National Education Association as a "reimaging of the existing Future Educators Association" (About Educators Rising Ohio, 2015). Students are afforded opportunities to gain meaningful teaching experience and mentoring prior to starting college. Another recommendation by the taskforce was for stakeholders to provide loan forgiveness and scholarships to minority teacher candidates (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). Universities and districts were encouraged to engage in philanthropic efforts and advocate for policies at the national, state, and local levels knowing funding is a barrier for some minorities entering the teaching profession (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

Knowing that less than two percent of teachers in America's classrooms are African American males, universities, especially colleges of education, must ensure their affirmative action policies focus on recruiting African American men interested in teaching as a priority (Wallace et al, 2019). If colleges and universities believe that representation matters, they must put forth intentional efforts to ensure America's classrooms have qualified teachers that reflect the diversity of America. It is important to remember that colleges are businesses that are competing for America's students. Many students and families refer to annual college rankings as they make their decision where to pursue postsecondary education. Colleges compete with each other to produce the highest number of graduates passing credentialing exams and securing employment in a competitive job market. Diversity policies and initiatives often are not the highest priority in student recruitment (Burns Thomas, 2020; Goings & Bianco, 2016; Lynn, 2018).

Affirmative action in university admissions is addressing some of the known causes of the shortage of African American males becoming educators such as funding and providing support while in teacher education programs. Bianco et al. (2011) explains how financing a college education can serve as a deterrent for African American males considering college after high school. Many of these young men are first generation college students who do not know how to navigate the financial aid process or know the ramifications of acquiring significant debt for their future. Bianco et al. added, "Funding has been identified as one of the most serious needs of collegiate teacher pipeline programs" (Bianco et al., 2011, p.370). Hensel and Fiano (2018) explain the realities faced by students with financial need. "More students who lack appropriate financial assistance are working to finance their education, taking full-time jobs that affect time to study" (p.4). Students, especially low-income and minority students, must know

how to access financial aid from various sources such as the federal government using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) among other resources. A growing number of universities offer Financial Aid Camps for students and families, usually starting in January through April, when most citizens of the United States file their income taxes which are needed to complete the FAFSA (Hensell & Fianco, 2018; Hines et al., 2020). Financial aid representatives assist families with completing the FAFSA ensuring accuracy and electronic submission of the document.

Once the financial component of entering a college of education has been addressed, research shows minority students benefit from mentoring throughout their college years. Some universities provide minority students with mentors to help students navigate college (i.e., course selection, internships, degree progression, etc.). According to Wallace and Gagen (2019), mentorship and peer support are essential to African-American males being successful in teacher education programs. One of the study's findings was that "for eight of the 11 participants, the dispositions displayed by the instructors were just as significant as an ability to demonstrate extensive content knowledge" (p.423). Wallace and Gagen further explain that students in a teacher education program learn from the classroom management and instructional delivery techniques utilized by course instructors which they carry into the classroom (Wallace & Gagen, 2019). In regard to peer support, the researchers concluded that "A learning community that encourages group study, provides activities connecting students with public schools in the area, and emphasizes the positive aspects of entering the field of education has the potential to increase teacher education program retention" (p.424). Effective affirmative action programs not only can provide access to universities for African American males interested in pursuing education as a career, but also financial and academic support throughout college.

Implementation of affirmative action policies vary by university. There are universities that have comprehensive affirmative action programs that provide funding and ongoing support for students. In addition, there are specific colleges within some university systems that actively recruit underrepresented students. Ohio University in Athens, Ohio has a program in the College of Education called *Brothers Rise* that seeks to recruit African American males as future teachers. On the other hand, there are universities that only view affirmative action as a means of increasing diversity for appearance's sake (Douglas et al., 2004; Thompson & Allen, 2012). Universities need to remember the intent of affirmative action when established in the 1960s was to remedy past discriminatory practices.

As a result of historical discriminatory practices, unequal school funding, and a lack of engagement in schools, generations of African American students continue to not be prepared for college and career (Hensel & Fiano, 2018; Saddler, 2005). The achievement gap continues to exist between African American students and their white peers (Cormier, 2020; Thompson & Allen, 2012). The majority of teacher education programs require students to pass standardized tests such as the Praxis exams that measure if students have the academic skills necessary to be successful in teacher education programs. African American students have the highest failure rate of teacher preparation exams in the nation (Educational Testing Service, 2020; Wallace & Gagen, 2019). Wynter-Hoyte et al. (2020) recommends that teacher education programs help African American students “understand the biased nature of Praxis Core and can help students examine test items and strategize accordingly; and can help students use their cultural and linguistic knowledge and dexterity to beat the testing game” (p.33).

The state of Ohio requires all teacher education programs to be nationally accredited. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and the Association for

Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) are the two national accreditors recognized by the state of Ohio. Accreditation is defined by CAEP as “quality assurance through external peer review. When an institution or specialized program is accredited, it has demonstrated that it meets standards set by organizations representing the academic community, professionals, and other stakeholders” (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2020). Although CAEP and AAQEP adhere to research based measures to accredit educator preparation programs, AAQEP states that it is committed to “multiplying preparation pathways that give access to and advancement in the education profession” (Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation, 2021, p.6). According to Will (2019), advocates for increasing teacher diversity praise AAQEP’s accreditation process as having a holistic collaborative nature compared to the top down compliance approach of CAEP which requires specific quantitative data such as the number of students scoring in the top half on nationally normed assessments.

African American students often do not perform as well as their peers on high stakes testing in part due to the rigid means of displaying proficiency (Thompson & Allen, 2012). Few would argue that there should not be measures of accountability in education; the argument is how we assess if students are prepared for college and career. In 2002, America passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which became “equated with one ultimate objective: producing high test scores” (Thompson & Allen, 2012, p.218). As a result of this, the high stakes testing movement has become the number one criterion by which student knowledge and school quality are assessed in America (Thompson & Allen, 2012). Thompson and Allen provided a questionnaire and focus group at a low performing high school in 2003 to learn about the impact of high stakes testing. Of all of the student participants (n = 268), African American respondents were more likely to state that they did not believe their teachers prepared them for high stakes

testing. In addition, similar to other racial groups in the study, African Americans expressed confidence in their reading skills; however, they did express a higher rate of difficulty in math on high stakes testing (Thompson & Allen, 2012). This study provides insight into how African American students perceive high stakes testing, but it also provides a possible solution.

Thompson and Allen (2012) shared, “African Americans were more likely than Whites and Latinos to say that if before-or after-school tutoring programs were offered to help them prepare for the state test, they would attend” (p.221). The researchers conclude the study by recommending that schools have multiple measures of assessing student achievement including authentic assessments which replicate real-world performances (Thompson & Allen, 2012).

Knowing that African American students struggle with entry exams, colleges of education must provide mentoring and support for African American students from day one of expressing interest in becoming teachers (Wallace & Gagen, 2019). African American male students being assigned a mentor provide students a resource to help navigate the academic, financial, and life challenges that can prevent students from becoming a teacher (Burns Thomas, 2020; Wallace & Gagen, 2019). Assigning a mentor is only the first step colleges of education must take to retain African American male students. Retention of African American male students also require colleges of education to provide financial support to students beyond government based financial aid. Scholarships, grants, and work study from government, college, and private donations should be offered to students (Burns Thomas, 2020; Ohio Department of Education, 2019; Wallace & Gagen, 2019). The third level of support research recommends is that colleges provide students cohort based programming in which students progress through education programs building relationships and learning skills that will lead to graduating with a

degree in education and a teaching job. It is important that colleges of education remember that African American culture is relational.

Due to African American culture being relational, African American students learn best when there is a positive relationship between the student and teacher (Jones & Nichols, 2014). In order to help educators, develop better relationships with African American students, educators must be introduced to practices that are culturally competent such as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as a way to engage students whose experiences and cultures are not included in mainstream education (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Although not impossible, it can be difficult to build relationships with African American students when the majority of educators they see daily do not look like them nor does the curriculum they are learning reflect their culture. No better adage symbolizes that African Americans are relational people than the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.” By embracing relationships, colleges of education will improve their recruitment and retention efforts. Ohio University’s *Brothers Rise* program provides African American male preservice teachers with mentors, financial support and a cohort model until graduation that address academic and cultural needs of its students in the program (Ohio University, 2020).

Recruitment Efforts of African American Male Teachers by School Districts

An African American male who has his teaching credentials is a hot commodity in America. Many are offered jobs prior to graduating from college (Lynn, 2018). They are tasked with deciding which district they want to work in such as urban, suburban, or rural. Research has proven the positive impact that African American male teachers can have on African American youth, especially males (Brockenbrough, 2014; Brown, 2012; Burns Thomas, 2020; Goings &

Bianco, 2016; Goings, 2015; McDougal et al., 2018; Norguera, 2009). Like most teachers, African American teachers want to make a difference in the lives of their students.

With more African American families moving into the suburbs, suburban districts have recently increased their recruitment efforts for African Americans, particularly African American males. What is frustrating for suburban district recruiters is that many African American male teachers do not apply to their districts. Suburban districts continue to combat a legacy of racism and exclusion in America. Minority teaching candidates do not apply to districts they do not feel welcomed (Brown, 2018; Duncan, 2018). How do suburban districts make their districts more appealing to minority candidates? Outreach is the answer. Research recommends that districts work with colleges to establish partnerships that create pipelines to the classroom for new teachers (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). The more opportunities that minority teaching candidates have to complete field experiences and student teaching in suburban districts, the more minority candidates will be open to working in suburban districts (Brown, 2018).

Recruitment does not solely fall upon suburban districts. African American male teachers must understand that their presence is needed in all schools across the country. Having the opportunity to serve as a role model in predominately white districts provides students and staff an opportunity to learn from African American teachers who bring their unique perspectives to the classroom (Jones & Nichols, 2013). One of the best ways for citizens of the United States to continue to improve race relations is for Americans to learn from one another. Teachers learn as much from their students as they teach their students (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968).

School districts must work with civic and private donors to make their communities more appealing. For example, districts offering housing incentives, tuition reimbursement, and other

financial incentives are becoming more common (Lynn, 2018; Ohio Department of Education, 2019). “Why would an African American male teacher want to teach in our district?” is the question that every school district interested in recruiting African American male teachers must reflect on. The Director of Human Resources should not be the sole person responsible for answering this question. Research shows that districts that have experienced success with hiring African American male teachers often establish committees with stakeholders from the district, civic organizations, community, and business partners that are dedicated to the mission (Brown, 2012; Burns Thomas, 2020; Office of Planning, 2016; Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

Once African American teachers are hired, school districts must understand that they have to focus on retention of these teachers. In recent years, more research has focused on the retention of novice teachers in America. By the end of their fifth year of teaching, 39 percent of teachers have left the profession (Watkins, 2005). For African American teachers, the percentage of new teachers leaving the profession is higher. The U.S. Department of Education published a report on diversity in the educator workforce in 2016 stating that African American teachers have an overall turnover rate of twenty-two percent compared to their White peers at fifteen percent over five years (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). According to research, teacher burnout, salary, unrealistic expectations and recruitment from other industries are some of the reasons African American males have stated for leaving the profession (Brockenbrough, 2014; Duncan, 2018). Having a research based mentoring and support program in place is essential to ensuring all novice teachers remain in the profession (Reitman & Karge, 2019; Watkins, 2005). When novice teachers leave the profession, not only are schools losing valuable employees they have invested in, but also students are losing role models and mentors that can make a difference in their lives.

With close to forty percent of all novice teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of teaching, many states have developed induction programs that range from one to five years to retain novice teachers (Reitman & Karge, 2019). The Ohio Resident Educator Program is a two year program in which all new teachers in Ohio receive mentorship and ongoing professional development. After completing the Ohio Resident Educator Program, teachers are permitted to apply for their five year professional license. Giving a novice teacher a classroom, curriculum, and a schedule will not lead to developing quality teachers that stay in the classroom for decades. Professional support must be present throughout teachers' careers. States and districts that do not provide ongoing support for novice teachers are setting them up for an early departure from the profession.

Summary

The research shows that there are two primary motivators that help African American males to become educators: 1) PK-12 School Experience, and 2) Diverse Role Models. African Americans' relationship with the American education system is complex. Whether it was "separate but equal" under the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling of 1896 or the monumental Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954, research shows that African Americans continue to learn in segregated underfunded schools in larger number than other racial groups (Douglas et al., 2004). African American males are often labeled as having behavioral issues and referred to special education programs at a higher rate than their peers (Bredekamp, 2010). In addition, teachers rate African American males as having the lowest academic potential and increased levels of aggressiveness which are traits that are devalued in schools (Cornbleth & Korth, 1980). Due to the persistent systemic inequalities such as school funding and low expectations by those

charged to educate them, large numbers of African American students do not have a favorable school experience. As a result, the teaching profession is not considered as a career choice.

When school districts prioritize ensuring schools are welcoming places where students are valued, the narrative of African Americans' and their educational experiences will change for the better. African American males' experiences in the classroom are not identical and are complex (Pabon, 2014). African American male teachers should not be the only educators held responsible for the success of minority children. It is important that all teachers be informed about the need for cultural sensitivity and cultural diversity to meet the needs of their students (Hudson, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teachers from all racial groups should be curious about their students' experiences and examine how their own bias and beliefs impact their work. In addition, knowing that all students, but especially African American students, learn best when there are positive relationships between teachers and students, school climate and culture should focus on relationship building. Improving African American males' school experiences also included schools encouraging them to consider education as a career. When students see teachers who are caring and passionate about their profession, it helps to convince African American males to explore the profession.

Encountering African American male teachers who are caring and passionate helps convince African American males to consider the teaching profession. Representation matters. Media in the United States pushes the narrative that African American males are either criminals, athletes or entertainers. Having an opportunity to learn from an African American male who loves learning so much that he has dedicated his life to helping other become lifelong learners is powerful. African American male teachers often take on many roles for students, especially African American males. McDougal et al. (2018) refers to African American male teachers being

“social fathers.” All students benefit from having diverse educators. America is a diverse country. Its classrooms need to have teachers that represent its diversity.

Various stakeholders are needed to ensure America’s classrooms have a diverse teaching staff including African American male teachers. School districts, universities, and policy makers are encouraged to create policies and programs that recruit and retain African American male educators. Those interested in increasing the number of African American male teachers must create a “student to teacher pipeline” to ensure every African American male who expresses interest in the education profession is supported.

According to the research, targeted recruitment programs need to start as early as middle school for African American males (Wallace & Gagen, 2019). At the collegiate level, mentoring and support are essential throughout college. In addition to providing mentoring and support during college, African American males need access to assistance and resources to help finance higher education. African American male education majors who feel supported from their universities are more likely to complete their degrees and become teachers. Upon receiving their teaching credentials, school districts actively recruiting African American males are recommended to continue to provide mentoring and support for these novice teachers. School districts are encouraged to also look within their districts to increase the number of African American male teachers. More research is showing that African American males work in the education field as support staff, paraprofessionals, coaches or volunteers (Burns Thomas, 2020; Goings, 2015). Districts should be willing to invest in these individuals to support those interested in becoming licensed teachers.

Chapter III. Methodology

The purpose of this research study was to explore the motivations and obstacles that African American males encounter as they enter the teaching profession. The literature review for this research study explained the history of African American males in teaching and the need to recruit more African American male teachers. There is a lack of literature regarding affording African American male teachers an opportunity to share their unique stories leading them to become teachers. This qualitative study provided African American male teachers an opportunity to share their thoughts in regard to the motivations and obstacles that they have experienced on the path to becoming a teacher. This chapter starts with the researcher explaining the research design and qualitative approach that were selected for this study. Following the section on research design and qualitative approach, participants and sampling techniques that were used in the study are explained. The next section of the chapter consists of identifying ethical considerations of the study. After discussing ethical considerations, instrumentation and data sources that were used in the study are explained. The next two sections of this chapter are data collection procedures and data analysis which inform readers of how data was collected and analyzed for this study. The final two sections of this chapter address the researcher's assumptions regarding what was believed to be true and not questioned during the study and trustworthiness measures that ensure the validity of the study.

Research Questions

1. What motivates African American males to become teachers?
2. What obstacles are faced by African American males in the process of becoming teachers?

3. How can teacher preparation programs prepare African American males to become successful teachers?

Research Design and Qualitative Approach

Phenomenology as a type of qualitative research affords participants an opportunity to share their own perspectives on a phenomenon they have experienced, specifically being an African American male teacher. Critical Race Theory and phenomenology work well together to prioritize the experiences and voices of participants because Critical Race Theory “requires the continued examination of practices and policies, particularly those that are intended to remedy inequality” (Burns Thomas, 2020, p.217). This aligns with the Counter Storytelling tenant of Critical Race Theory in that it allows “minoritized or marginalized groups to contribute their stories to the dominant culture narrative” (Goings, 2015, p. 101). The primary means of collecting data in this phenomenological study was through interviews (Delgado et al., 2017; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Interview questions for this research study focused on motivations and obstacles that African American males encountered in deciding to become teachers. Using an audio recorder and/or Zoom, the researcher interviewed participants. Participant interviews were transcribed using a transcription service.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Participants for this research study consisted of African American male teachers. Experience, grade level and setting are variables that play a role in forming teachers’ perspective of the profession. During the participant recruitment phase of the study, the researcher made efforts to ensure participants had varied teaching experience, taught in a variety of school levels (e.g., elementary, middle, and high school) and in different settings such as urban, suburban, and rural. The researcher met with eight African American male teachers for this research study.

With the limited number of African American male teachers available, eight participants were viewed as a sample representation that came with diverse backgrounds such as experience and settings. Although eight participants were the base number of participants for this study, the researcher was open to more participants. The participant criteria outlined above aligns to the research questions at the inception of this research study.

Participants in this study represented a sample population of African American male teachers in Northeast Ohio. The researcher contacted the Cleveland Area Minority Educator Recruitment Association (CAMERA) to acquire a list of African American male educators in Northeast Ohio. CAMERA is an organization in Northeast Ohio that helps school districts recruit minority educators. An email was sent to educators on the list describing the study and seeking their participation. Interested participants notified the researcher of interest in participating by returning an electronic participation document that was attached to the email introducing the study. When the participation documents, including the digital consent document, were returned to the researcher, the researcher contacted the participants to set up an interview. There were no incentives or compensation provided to participants for this study.

Another sampling method that was utilized for this research study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which the researcher recruited participants who could provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon being studied (Saldana, 2013). Snowball sampling is a type of purposive sampling in which participants recommend other potential participants that fit the participant criteria for this research study (Naderifar et al., 2017). Three out of the eight participants in the study were based on recommendations from other participants. The more participants interviewed for this study strengthened its representation of African American male teachers.

The criteria used for inclusion in this study was being an African American male who has experience as a licensed teacher in the PK-12 school setting. Potential participants who were not African American male teachers were excluded from this research study. Due to having either taught in various districts in Northeast Ohio or having attended events hosted by CAMERA, the researcher did have relationships with some of the participants in this research study prior to the study. No participants in this study had a working relationship with the researcher during the time this research study was conducted.

Ethical Considerations

Two ethical considerations were at the heart of this research study. The first was to do no harm to participants and provide ample information to the participant to prepare him for the interview. Interview questions were shared with participants prior to interviews so that they were informed about what they would be asked. The second ethical consideration was to ensure confidentiality of the participant. In order to establish participation in the study with consent, confidentiality had to be guaranteed to ensure there were no repercussions for participation in the study. The researcher assigned pseudonyms to protect the privacy of participants. All data collected during the study was kept on password protected computer files on a flash drive which was stored in a locked cabinet. Participants provided consent to the researcher who explained the purpose of the study, provided study details so participants understood implications of the study, and their right to withdraw at any time.

Instrumentation and Data Sources

An interview questionnaire was developed seeking to understand the motivations and obstacles that African American males encountered during their journey to becoming a teacher. The first section of the questionnaire focused on personal motivation, previous experiences with African American male teachers, and support each participant received in their teacher education program. The second section of the questionnaire focused on being an African American male teacher. Specifically, the benefits and challenges of being an African American male teacher were addressed. The final section of the questionnaire focused on recommendations to increase the number of African American male teachers.

The interview questionnaire aligned with the three research questions at the foundation of this research study that focused on African American male teachers' motivations and obstacles to becoming teachers. The interview questionnaire afforded participants an opportunity to share their experiences as African American male teachers. In addition to supporting the research questions, the questionnaire also aligned with Critical Race Theory which seeks to look at societal institutions through the lens of race and power (Thomas, 2020). Questions were designed to be open-ended which provided participants an opportunity to explain in their own words (Seidman, 2013).

Data Collection Procedures

After receiving the electronically signed digital consent form, the researcher and participant discussed mutually agreeable dates, times, and locations for the interview. Most of the interviews were scheduled within a week of confirmation of participation in the study. The duration of the interviews was on average thirty minutes to one hour. All interviews were recorded using either an audio recorder or Zoom recording. Participants were provided a copy of

their transcripts to ensure accuracy; all were satisfied with recording accuracy (Maxwell, 2013; Seidman, 2013).

The interviews were conducted in-person at various school buildings throughout Northeast Ohio or agreed upon meeting locations during times that worked for both the participants and researcher. Settings such as classrooms, conference rooms, or meeting locations that allowed for minimal distraction provided optimal audio recording of interviews. Meeting locations off-site from the workplace and neutral, such as a library study room, coffee shops, or parks were offered to participants to meet given the potentially sensitive nature of conversations. In addition, some interviews were also conducted using Zoom.

Data Analysis

Narrative analysis was used because it involves “the reformulation of stories presented by respondents taking into account context of each case and different experiences of each respondent” (Business Research Methodology, 2020, p.1). The researcher created open codes reading the data and developing coding categories based on the participants’ terms and categories. This method is consistent with inductive which “involves reading the data and developing your coding categories, based on what data (including the participants’ terms and categories) seem most important” (Maxwell, 2013, p.107). All codes came directly from the interviews. Some organizational categories such as motivation, obstacles and recommendations were derived from the research questions of the study. Maxwell adds, “Organizational categories are broad areas or issues that you want to investigate, or that serve as useful ways of ordering your data” (p. 107). Themes emerged from the organizational categories. “The researcher then searches for connecting threads and patterns among the excerpts within those categories and for connections between the various categories that might be called themes” (Seidman, 2013, p.

127). Taguette was the qualitative data analysis software used for the coding of this research study.

The researcher began the data analysis by gathering transcripts of the participants' interviews. Saldana (2013) writes, "Preparing data for coding gives you a bit more familiarity with the contents and is comparable to 'warming up' before more detailed work begins" (p. 17). Next, the researcher examined the transcripts for patterns or repeated ideas that emerged from the interviews. Based on repeated patterns and ideas the researcher identified in the initial review of the transcripts, a set of codes were established that were used to categorize the data. After developing the initial coding system, the researcher examined the transcripts again to label them with codes and identify new codes. The last step was the researcher identifying recurring themes by linking codes together (Saldana, 2013).

Assumptions

There were four assumptions that the researcher believed to be true and did not question in the data analysis. The first assumption was that participants felt comfortable providing honest responses to questions during the interviews. Measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity were reviewed with participants in the consent form and the data collecting process. In addition, the researcher afforded the participants choice in regard to the setting of their interviews. The researcher being an African American male educator also provided a sense of comfort in shared cultural and professional experiences. The second assumption was that the participants in the study were representative of African American male teachers. During the participant recruitment phase of the study, the researcher made efforts to ensure participants had varied teaching experience, taught in a variety of school levels (e.g., elementary, middle, and high school) and in different settings such as urban, suburban, and rural. The third assumption was that multiple

perspectives exist in any study. While the purpose of this research study was stated clearly, the viewpoint of the researcher, participants, and audience may be different. The final assumption of this study was that all participants believed in the importance of improving the recruitment of African American male teachers in America's classrooms.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the research study was determined using three components: credibility, transferability, and authenticity. Credibility was established when the researcher asked participants to review the data collected by the interviewer and the researcher's interpretation of that data. "Member checking, also known as participant or respondent validation, is a technique for exploring the credibility of results. Data or results are returned to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences" (Birt et al., 2016, p.1802). Participants were provided a transcript of their respective interviews and a copy of the research report upon completion of the study. In regard to transferability, the researcher utilized purposive sampling which is a sampling technique in which the researcher recruited participants who could provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon being studied. The final component used to establish trustworthiness was authenticity. Participants understood their participation in the study would be beneficial in regard to improving the number of African American male teachers in America. The recruitment communication and digital consent form specified the purpose of this study (i.e., recruiting African American male teachers). Their voices would serve as a missing link in regard to hearing from African American males who wanted their stories shared regarding becoming teachers.

Chapter IV. Results

This study examined the motivations and obstacles of African American males entering the teaching profession. The chapter is organized by the research questions posed in Chapter One: 1) *What motivates African American males to become teachers?* 2) *What obstacles are faced by African American males in the process of becoming teachers?* and 3) *How can teacher preparation programs prepare African American males to become successful teachers?* In recent years, researchers and school districts have given more attention to the recruitment of African American male teachers. This study provided African American male teachers an opportunity to share their lived experiences to inform university and school district officials seeking to increase the number of African American male teachers. After addressing the findings of the research questions, the researcher concludes the chapter by summarizing the results of the study.

Eight African American male educators were interviewed for this study (see Table 1). Participants in the study worked in public preK-12 schools in Northeast Ohio, and all held at least a Master's degree. Half of the participants taught in suburban districts and the other participants taught in urban districts. The years of teaching experience for the participants in this study ranged from two years to twenty-four years in the profession. Three of the eight participants held administrative positions within a school setting. Participants selected either virtual or in-person interviews to best meet their needs. Six of the eight interviews took place through Zoom. The two in-person interviews were recorded using an audio recorder in a public library study room.

Table 1*Participant Profiles*

Participant Pseudonyms	Teaching Experience	Teaching Level	Teaching Concentration	Teaching Setting
Jason	6 years	Elementary	English/Math/Administrator	Urban
Andrew	24 years	Middle School	Health Education	Suburban
Brandon	14 years	Middle School	Intervention Specialist	Suburban
Kevin	6 years	Middle School	English	Suburban
Michael	12 years	Middle School	History/ Administrator	Urban
Richard	7 years	Middle School	Intervention Specialist	Suburban
Shawn	2 years	High School	Physical Education	Urban
Walter	16 years	High School	English/Administrator	Urban

Research Question 1*What motivates African American males to become teachers?*

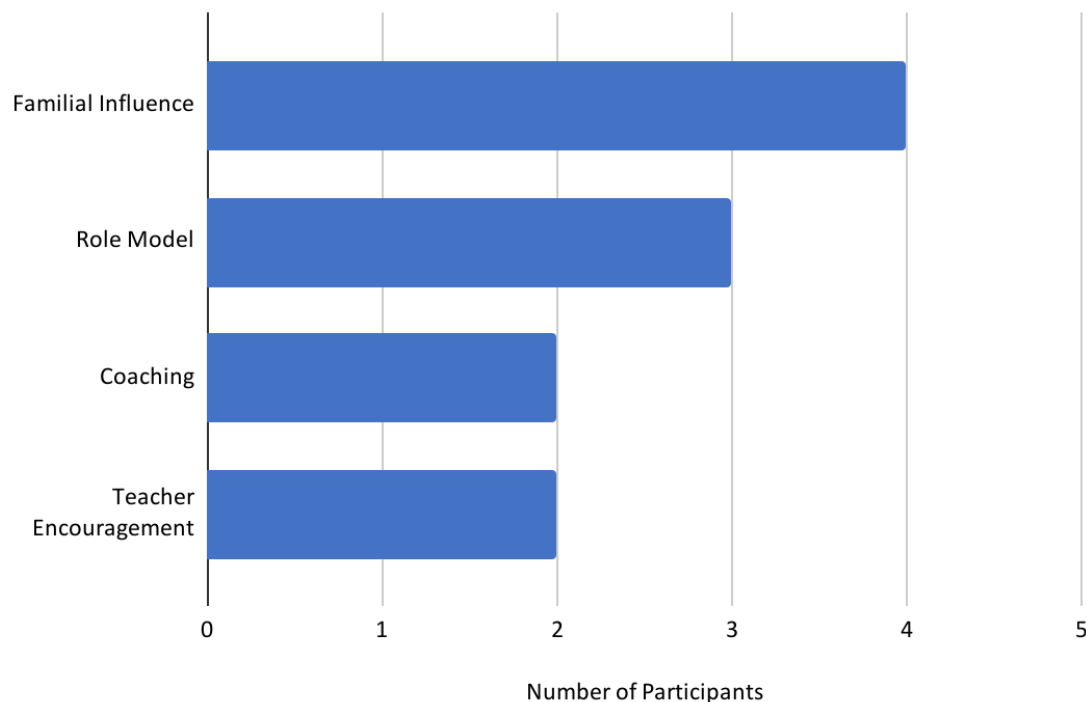
Participants in this study shared a number of reasons that motivated them to pursue teaching as a career.

Familial Influence

The number one motivator for African American males to become teachers was having family members who were in the profession (see Figure 1). Four of the eight participants (50%) indicated having a family member in the profession. Walter, a veteran educator who is currently an administrator, understood the importance of education at an early age. He stated, “My father was a college professor and I really liked being able to influence the masses as an educator.” Growing up he remembered his father was regularly referred to as “Doctor” or “Professor” in the community. He knew that educators occupied a position of influence and respect, which he aspired to. Walter shared that he remembered visiting his father at the university where he worked and seeing students “hang on to every word that came out of that man’s mouth. He was really respected for being knowledgeable and approachable.” Another participant Richard, a special education teacher, indicated that “a lot of the ladies in my family, they teach at the

elementary level or special ed.” Richard recalled there was seldom a family gathering where teaching was not a topic of discussion. Richard smiled as he remembered how he could not wait to “enter the family business.” When he had to choose an area of concentration, Richard recalled the only area that he considered was special education due to seeing the impact teachers could have on that population of students.

Whether it was a parent or other relative, participants shared the influence these family members had on deciding to pursue teaching as a career. The participants that were motivated by having family members who were educators expressed how school did not end at the dismissal bell, but transferred to their homes where they watched family members grade assignments and participate in other activities. Shawn, a high school Physical Education teacher, shared, “Besides teaching, my mother also worked as a private tutor at our house throughout the year. It is hard for me to remember a day that she was not planning lessons or tutoring in addition to her parenting responsibilities. She loved teaching!”

Figure 1*Motivations to Become a Teacher*

Besides witnessing a passion for teaching from family members, participants also shared that having family members in the profession prepared them for being minorities in a white female dominated profession. Richard explained, “You’re in a field where it’s predominately Caucasian, you feel like you’re constantly on stage and that you have to prove yourself.” Having family members who could relate to the challenges of teaching, especially as a minority, gave some participants motivation to stay the course. Walter added, “In so many ways as Black men, we’ve been portrayed as not knowing and being ignorant.” The portrayal of being “ignorant” was an issue that African American male teachers not only faced by colleagues, but also their students. Walter elaborated, “And they (African American students) almost prefer someone white being their instructor, but not understanding they’re really disrespecting themselves and having to educate them on these things...not necessarily embarrassing them, but letting them know what they’re doing and how they’re doing these things and what it looks like outside.”

Walter's comments were supported by another participant Kevin, a middle school English teacher, who shared, "We have to continue to prove ourselves even after we've reached a certain level of education and experience. We're continuously challenged where our counterparts may not be challenged." Having family members that understood the challenges that race and, at times, gender played in their professional lives, and learning from their examples, helped some of the participants persevere.

Richard grew up in a home where African American history was valued and taught. He was aware of the struggles that African American teachers faced securing a job during integration due to the stories that his family shared with him over the years. When he started teaching, he remembered those stories and the obstacles other African American teachers, including family members, encountered and they inspired him to persist. Richard said, "I come from a tuff [sic] stock of teachers in my family. We don't break easily." As African American male teachers, having a support system including family was essential for their success in the profession.

Becoming a Role Model

Three of the eight (37.5%) participants in the study mentioned the opportunity to become a role model as a motivator to becoming a teacher. Andrew, a middle school Health teacher, said, "I thought about 'How can I give back to my community?'" Besides having an African American Health teacher who eventually became an Assistant High School Principal, I never saw African American male teachers prior to going to a historically black college or university (HBCU)." Michael, a veteran teacher and current administrator, spoke about how being a role model can have a lasting impact. "Being a role model is important. The benefit is having students, you know, look up to me and they can always have something to look back on." Participants in this

study were aware of the limited number of African American male teachers they encountered in their preK-12 experience.

Participants who spoke of wanting to be role models for students emphasized the importance of relatability. Richard explained, “As an African American, my story’s just a little bit different than others, and maybe there’s some kids that I can connect to because of that.” The ability of African American male teachers to connect to students transcends race. Andrew added, “Not only for students of color, but for all students, when students see an African American male who is educated, professional and is a leader, I am destroying stereotypes of successful African American males only being athletes or entertainers.” Many of the participants shared that they wanted to be athletes and entertainers growing up, but their parents and role models encouraged them to keep their options open and discussed the merits of the teaching profession.

Coaching

For some of the participants, having an opportunity to influence students beyond the classroom served as another motivator to becoming a teacher. Two of the eight participants (25%) mentioned coaching as a motivating factor to becoming a teacher. Jason, an elementary school principal and former teacher, explained, “It was my interest in sports and my love for kids. It seemed like teaching was a natural connection to coaching.” Andrew recalled how the coaches in his life were examples of being “good strong men” for him since he grew up in a single parent household led by his mother. Andrew elaborated, “Not only did I enjoy wrestling and football in high school, but I also saw my coaches as father figures in my life.” Brandon, a middle school Intervention Specialist and basketball coach, expressed how he used his role as a coach to get students to consider teaching as a career. He stated, “I’ve been coaching for 14 years and a lot of my students, they come back and ask me, if they’re in college, ‘What do you think

about me going into teaching?’ I’m like that’s great. We need more African American males to come on back and do it.” Jason shared that many of his coaches encouraged him to use sports to secure a college degree if being a professional athlete was not an option. “I was good at basketball, but my high school coaches knew that I did not have the talent or genetics to go the NBA. I appreciate that they had me focus on playing college basketball. Being a scholar athlete allowed me to graduate with a degree and career.”

Teacher Encouragement

In addition to the above mentioned motivators for African American males to pursue teaching as a career, the encouragement of teachers also served as a motivator for participants in the study. Two of the eight participants (25%) mentioned having an educator encourage them to pursue teaching as a career. Shawn recalled, “My math teacher was an African American woman and she said that teaching was a good field for young African American men.” Shawn had a tremendous amount of respect for this teacher and her recommendation of teaching as a possible career opened the door to further exploring the profession. Although Shawn would eventually become a Physical Education teacher, he added, “Math was never my thing, but it meant the world to me that my teacher thought that I had what it took to be a teacher. To this day, I know that her encouragement is one of the reasons that I am a teacher.”

While Walter did not encounter his first African American male instructor until he was in high school, he did speak of having some white teachers that set high expectations for students and told him that he should go to college. “Mr. Ryan was a white teacher in his mid-fifties that loved history. He was not afraid to address controversial topics and highlight famous African Americans in history. Mr. Ryan was one of the first white teachers that told me that I was college material. I never forgot that.” Both Shawn and Walter had teachers that they not only respected,

but also encouraged them to pursue postsecondary education which led to them becoming educators.

Research Question 2

What obstacles are faced by African American males in the process of becoming teachers?

Participants in this study shared obstacles that they faced in the process of becoming teachers such as lacking a support system, feeling deterred from pursuing rigorous curriculum, and isolation.

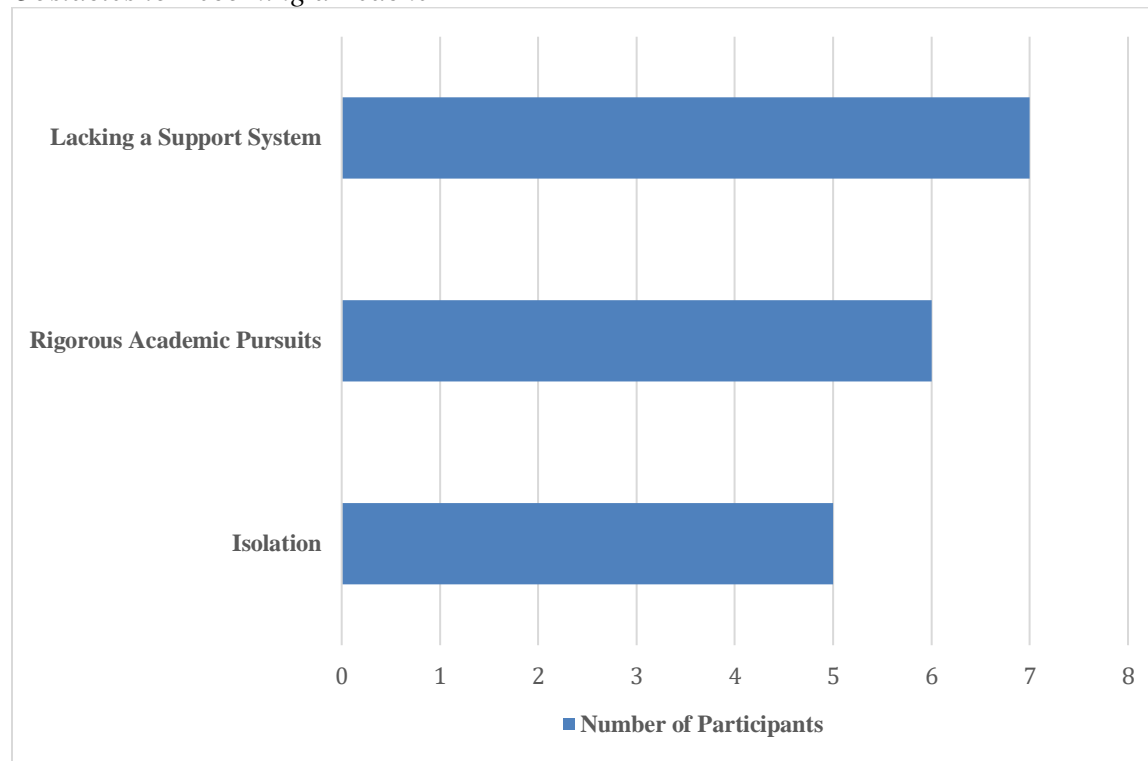
Lacking a Support System

Although the majority of participants for this study were not first generation college students, an obstacle that some participants had to overcome was establishing a support system. Every college is different and has its own culture. Getting assimilated to college requires establishing a support system to address academic, financial, and social emotional needs among others. Participants shared that the support systems that helped them mitigate the obstacles they encountered in college were both formal and informal. Some of the participants in the study shared that they had formal mentors such as academic advisors or professors that they regularly met with throughout their college experience to help them navigate college. For other participants, their support system consisted of family or peers that formed study groups.

While seven of the eight participants (87.5%) mentioned the importance of having a support system (see Figure 2); establishing a support system did not necessarily start in their freshman year for all participants. Although Andrew decided to attend a HBCU due in part to wanting to be around other African American college students and receiving a scholarship to help with expenses, upon arriving on campus, he did not feel supported. Andrew shared, “ I remember how scared I felt being in another state and not knowing anyone. No one from the

college reached out to me to ensure I was in a good place. As a result, I linked up with other freshman who also needed guidance. I was put on academic probation my freshman year due to feeling overwhelmed and partying too much.” It took being put on academic probation before Andrew was assigned a mentor and learned study skills.

Students who lack a support system do not have the luxury that Walter had starting his freshman year of college. Walter stated, “My advisor really helped me navigate the system understanding the right classes to take as well as how to engage with certain people. We met biweekly. It was nice knowing I had someone to help me and wanted me to succeed.” For many young adults who are away from home for the first time while attending college, they do not know how to advocate for themselves much less who to ask for assistance. Kevin spoke about how he felt supported by his university. “I think at my university, staff members went out of their way to make sure that there was a clear understanding of what I needed to do and also how they could support me. I always had the opportunity to reach out to ask questions or to have meetings about next steps.”

Figure 2*Obstacles to Becoming a Teacher***Lack of Rigorous Academic Pursuits**

Besides lacking a support system, another obstacle that some African American male students faced on their journey to the classroom was pursuing rigorous college preparatory courses. Although participants in the study did not indicate having academic struggles, participants did share that they perceived honors and Advanced Placement courses in high school as being for white students. Due to not seeing other African American students in the honors and Advanced Placement courses offered in their schools, some participants self-selected to not enroll in rigorous courses. Richard stated, “My high school did have AP courses; however, only white kids took those courses.” As a result, participants who self-selected to not enroll in honors and Advanced Placement courses did not benefit from the rigorous curriculum and college credit opportunities that some of their white peers took advantage of.

Although all of the participants believed that they were prepared for college, five of the eight participants (62.5%) shared that they did not feel as academically prepared as their white peers. Not only did some participants share that they self-selected not to pursue honors and Advanced Placement courses in high school; it is also important to note that participants had not been encouraged to pursue honors and Advanced Placement courses by their teachers or school counselors. Enrolling in honors and Advanced Placement courses in high school not only exposes African American students to rigorous college preparatory curriculum, it also helps students improve their study skills. The content learned in the courses students take in both high school and college, especially content specialization courses, culminates with state mandated licensure test to get a teaching license. Walter shared how having an advisor that helped him improve his study skills resulted in him passing the exam. “Regarding the licensure test, it was important that my advisor helped me to join study groups and become familiar with the test.” Unlike Andrew’s lack of study skills that resulted in being placed on academic probation his freshman year, Walter’s advisor ensured he learned the study skills necessary to be successful in college.

Isolation

For some participants, isolation was felt as a result of feeling excluded from activities their white peers participated in. Participants observed that their white peers would have established study groups that were formed by networking either through classes or backgrounds. Jason remembered never seeing black students being included or asked to join those groups. “You knew that they did not want you there. I had a feeling that I was being stereotyped as a weak student because I was black. Truth be told, I never received less than a B in any of my courses.”

As a result of being excluded from study groups with some of their white peers, participants such as Michael formed study groups consisting of mostly African American students. Not only did these study groups provide academic support for students, but also provided social and cultural reinforcements and opportunities. Michael remembered, “Not only was it great to work on assignments with friends from class, but we would laugh, talk, and support each other as well. There were some cool white peers that joined our study group as well. No one was excluded from the study group we formed. Many of us still stay in contact.”

Participants mentioned adjusting to being the only African American in their college classes and the ramifications that went along with that. Andrew recalled, “I lost count of the number of times that all eyes would turn to me in class when we would discuss racial issues. I truly believed some of my classmates thought that I spoke for Black America.”

Research Question 3

How can teacher preparation programs prepare African American males to become successful teachers?

Participants in this study shared ways teacher preparation programs can prepare African American males to become successful teachers by providing them opportunities to teach in diverse settings and understanding the reality of teaching.

Diverse Settings and Resources

Participants shared their frustration with the lack of exposure to different school settings (i.e., urban, suburban, etc.) during their field and student teaching experiences. Many colleges of education have students do field work and student teaching experiences during their Junior and Senior years. Without the opportunity to visit schools in different communities, students will not be knowledgeable of the opportunities and challenges each present. Jason shared, “I think I

would have liked the opportunity to get into a greater variety of schools.” Most participants only went to schools in the towns in which their colleges were located or nearby towns. In addition, field placements and student teaching experiences serve as an opportunity for both the student teacher and district to see if they are a good fit for each other.

Participants shared that they were amazed by the vast resources that were afforded to suburban students. Shawn remembered doing a field experience in a suburban district in which not only did every student have a laptop but also an iPad. He added, “I was both impressed and angered by what I saw in that suburban school. Where I student taught in an urban district, the ratio of computers to students was at least fifteen to one. Not to mention that the technology in the urban district was outdated.” Andrew shared that the building where he works in a suburban district was recently built. “Having luxuries such as air conditioning, flexible learning spaces, and modern technology are taken for granted by wealthy districts. I grew up attending schools with inadequate HVAC and some windows that would not open.” Due to his present experience working in a suburban school, Andrew believed that all preservice teachers should have exposure to teaching in a state of the art school with vast resources. Brandon recalled doing field experiences in some urban districts that were so outdated that he thought he was in a “prison”. “I hated going to that building during the few weeks that I completed my field experience. I couldn’t imagine having to attend there for four years or work there for years.”

The Reality of Teaching

In addition to dealing with the frustrations of resource inequality in schools, some participants shared that they were not prepared for the realities of teaching from their teacher preparation programs. Having served as both a teacher and administrator, Michael shared, “I didn’t know that students would exhibit those types of behaviors; if someone would have told me

‘Hey, this is what to look out for. It would have been a better experience.’ Michael’s sentiment was shared by other participants, especially participants who worked in urban districts. Similar to Michael, Walter said, “When it comes to discipline, community and student relations, you’re supposed to be able to resolve all these things. And many of us, we have no clue because we’re trying to figure things out ourselves.” Participants shared that they believed the pedagogical and content specialization courses they took in college prepared them for the classroom, but more emphasis was needed in the areas of classroom management, special education, and cultural competence.

Both Brandon and Richard, middle school intervention specialists, explained how important it is for preservice teachers to be knowledgeable regarding classroom management, special education, and cultural competence. Richard shared, “It is surprising the number of new teachers that have never read an IEP or 504 prior to their first job. These are legal documents. Teachers need to know the spectrum of services that they can utilize to help students.” Brandon added, “Truth be told, an intervention specialist is a mediator between teachers, the student, and parents. You cannot count on all parties coming to the table with the best interest of the student in mind. As an intervention specialist, I need to have relationships with all stakeholders, know the law pertaining to special education, and advocate for what is best for each student.”

Brandon further explained that building relationships with stakeholders is instrumental for all teachers. “I’m a unicorn in this profession. Being a black male teacher, I’m used to being the minority in a school setting. I take for granted appreciating who my students are and their backgrounds because like I said, I’m used to being the only one. All teachers need to respect who their students are and where they come from. Some call it cultural competence, but truthfully it is just respecting and acknowledging all people.” Both Brandon and Richard stated that good

classroom management starts with “building relationships.” Richard explained, “Yes, establishing routines and procedures that is taught in college is important, but getting to know students and affording them a chance to know you, within reason, makes for a community of learners.”

The feeling of isolation that some of the participants shared concerning being the only African American in some of their college classes reappeared in the workplace as novice teachers. Since Andrew was the only African American male in the district in which he completed his student teaching, his mentor teacher and school administrators made him the informal disciplinarian in the building. “Being black and male, did not always work in my favor where I student taught. I was viewed as being able to connect with at-risk students and intimidating. Why? I believe they thought it was because I was black. I never raised my voice or had disciplinary issues because I developed a rapport with every student. That is the key.” The importance of rapport not only between teacher and student, but also colleagues was discussed by participants. Michael explained that while he felt prepared as a teacher, he wished there were other African Americans in his building to network with. Michael elaborated, “Work becomes your second home. It is important to see others that look like you and can relate to your experiences as an African American. I work with great colleagues, but we share little beyond teaching due to our racial and background differences.”

Summary

Participants of the study shared what motivated them to become teachers including having family members who were educators, the desire to become role models for youth, the opportunity to use athletic coaching as an extension of teaching, and the encouragement of teachers from their secondary and post-secondary years of education. While no two stories were

alike, the themes mentioned above were found throughout the study. Regarding obstacles faced in the process of becoming teachers, participants shared that lacking a support system in college, feeling deterred from pursuing rigorous curriculum, especially in high school, and dealing with isolation were obstacles that they faced in the process of becoming teachers. In regard to how teacher preparation programs can prepare African American males to become successful teachers, participants shared the need for exposure to a variety of teaching settings and resources along with better preparation for the realities of teaching. Chapter Five discusses the meaning of these findings and provides recommendations based on the findings of the study and current literature to increase the number of African American male educators.

Chapter V. Conclusions And Recommendations

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the key research findings in relation to the research aims and research questions. In addition, this chapter will describe how its findings contribute to the existing literature regarding the recruitment of African American male teachers. It will also review the limitations of the study and propose opportunities for future research.

Review of the Study

This study aimed to explore the motivations and obstacles faced by African American male teachers on their journey to the classroom. In addition to motivations and obstacles faced by African American male teachers, the study examined how teacher preparation programs can better prepare African American males to become successful teachers. The results indicate that African American males shared similar experiences concerning motivations and obstacles that they faced entering the profession. Family influence was the main motivator of African American males becoming teachers. Regarding obstacles faced by African American males, lacking a support system was the main obstacle that had to be overcome to achieve their goal of becoming teachers. In addition, participants shared how teacher preparation programs can help African American males become successful teachers such as exposure in their programs to a variety of teaching settings and understanding the reality of teaching.

Limitations

This study, like all studies, has limitations. The first limitation of this study was the small number of participants. With only two percent of teachers being African American males, it was challenging to find potential participants. Although the researcher utilized an organization that focused on the recruitment of minority teachers, another effective recruiting technique was snowballing in which potential participants were recommended by other participants. Once

participants were identified, scheduling mutually agreeable times for the interviews presented challenges. Although scheduling the interviews was challenging at times, all of the participants expressed their desire to be a part of this important study and were able to find mutually agreeable times to be interviewed.

Another limitation of this study was that the participants were only from Northeast Ohio. While the researcher chose Ohio due to its African American population mirroring the country's at 13% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022), future research can draw participants from a broader sample region. With the majority of African Americans living in the southern part of the country, having participants from that region of the country would have benefitted the study. Moreover, some of the leading programs concerning the recruitment of African American male teachers originated in southern states such as South Carolina.

Besides the limited number of participants residing in Northeast Ohio, another limitation of the study was participants were affiliated with public schools. The majority of schools in the United States are public; however, charter schools are becoming more popular especially in minority communities. While this study focused on the motivations and obstacles that African American males encountered on their journey to the classroom, participants from charter schools would have enriched this study by contributing their experiences.

Discussion

Research Question 1

What motivates African American males to become teachers?

African American males are motivated to become teachers for a variety of reasons that are grounded in making a difference in the lives of students (Bianco et al., 2011, Boswell, 2010, Brown, 2012). Participants shared that familial influence was the top motivator to becoming a

teacher. Studies have shown that school experiences of family and friends were motivators for African American males to become teachers (Brandy, 2008). In a study conducted by Boswell (2010), familial influence was also a theme that emerged as a reason that African American males pursue teaching. Familial influence is a variable that stakeholders who want to increase the number of African American male teachers cannot control; however, the research does indicate that exposure to the profession, especially from family members, does have an impact on the recruitment of potential African American male teachers.

Besides familial influence, African American males in the study were motivated to pursue teaching to become role models. African American males are often labeled as having behavioral issues and referred to special education programs at higher rates than their peers (Bredekamp, 2010). According to Boswell (2010), not only are African American males labeled as having behavioral issues and referred to special education programs at a higher rate than their peers, they also have limited exposure, if any, to African American male teachers in their school experience. Participants of this study understood the role they played in destroying negative stereotypes that society has labeled them using the media among other means. The fact that all of the participants held advanced degrees could be related to what some of the participants shared about the perception of having to prove themselves to their colleagues while being role models for their students.

Various studies indicate that minority and disadvantaged students are more likely to attend college when they have diverse teachers (Burns Thomas, 2020; Lynn, 2018; Miller & Endo, 2005). Participants in the study understood the importance of being role models. For some students, African American male teachers are the only father figures in their lives. McDougal (2018) used the phrase “social fathers” to describe how African American male teachers are

viewed by African American students, especially African American male students. When school is perceived as a negative experience and African American males do not see other African American males in teaching roles, it is easy to come to the conclusion that many African American males do not consider teaching as a profession that they want to pursue.

Realizing that the classroom is not always a pleasant experience for African American males, athletics and the coaches that lead these young athletes are a saving grace for many African American males. Due to a lack of exposure to professional and upstanding African American males in their communities, some African American males would not consider a career other than becoming an athlete (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Participants shared the powerful influence that coaches have had on their lives and chosen profession. One participant shared that as a coach, he has had countless students ask him for career advice or about the teaching profession. African American male teachers understand their role in shifting the negative school experience some African American males encounter to one associated with a positive experience (McDougal, 2018; Pabon, 2016).

The positive school experiences that African American male teachers are committed to creating for all students, especially African American male students, is crucial to ensure there are African American male teachers for future students. Research has indicated that encouraging students to pursue teaching as a career should start as early as middle school (Wallace & Gagen, 2019). Programs such as Educators Rising allow students in middle and high school to explore the teaching profession. Miller and Endo (2005) recommend that exploratory elective courses in both middle and high school that focus on the teaching profession should be offered similar to how science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) electives are offered to students.

The participants of this study contributed another powerful recruitment resource influential teachers. What makes teachers influential are the relationships that are established with students based on respect and trust among other traits. African American males need positive relationships to help them be successful in life. Many African Americans do not come from middle class nuclear families. The support system that some students take for granted is not as established for some African American males. Whether it was the math teacher encouraging one of the participants to pursue teaching, a coach advising a former student about the teaching profession or a family member who was passionate about teaching, the relationships, encouragement, and lived experiences of these educators left a lasting impression that resulted in participants deciding teaching was the profession they wanted to dedicate their lives to.

Whether inside or outside of the classroom, African American male teachers are motivated to become teachers to make a positive difference in the lives of their students. Prior research and the participants in this study suggest that teaching is not an eight hour job in the confines of a classroom (Brown, 2018; Goings, 2015; Lynn, 2018; McDougal et al., 2018; Pabon, 2014). Teachers led by example whether in a classroom, athletic facility or at home. The most powerful recruitment resource communities have are great teachers that foster relationships that create a great learning experience for all learners.

Research Question 2

What obstacles are faced by African American males in the process of becoming teachers?

African American males in this study expressed that the lack of a support system was an obstacle that they had to overcome in the process of becoming teachers. Tasks such as applying for financial aid, registering for courses, and seeking academic and social supports must be learned in order to be successful in college. Studies show that African Americans have the

highest student loan debt of any racial group in America (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010; Wallace & Gagen, 2019). When students, especially minorities and disadvantaged students, are equipped with the support and knowledge to utilize resources that enable them to make informed decisions, more students will successfully navigate college and enter professions such as teaching that they are passionate about.

One way that colleges can help African American males navigate their institutions is by providing effective mentoring (Burns Thomas, 2020; Wallace & Gagen, 2019). What participants shared regarding lacking support systems as an obstacle to becoming teachers was found in other studies. Participants recalled feeling lost as freshman regarding how to navigate college. Moreover, participants shared that acquiring study skills and learning how to advocate for one's self were taught by mentors in college. There is no disputing the power of relationships in education (Kunjufu, 2002; Noguera, 2009; Pabon, 2016).

Bristol (2017) conducted research that supports what participants were saying that the lack of effective mentorship and autonomy were obstacles that African American males faced in the process of becoming teachers. Participants shared the importance of having someone they trusted and could go to concerning academic, social, and emotional issues among others. Due to the universities that many of the participants went to lacking institutional supports such as mentoring programs, many of the participants relied on individual mentors for their success. Having a mentor that supports them and is invested in their success is important because some participants did struggle due to the lack of cultural competence on college campuses. According to the National Education Association, cultural competence "is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than their own" (NEA, 2008). Stories were recalled by some participants of feeling like they spoke for all African Americans due to being the only

African American in their classes or the perception that all African Americans were weak students by their peers.

Researchers (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Noguera, 2009) have advocated for culturally competent practices in American schools by educators. Wallace and Gagen (2019) recommend the establishment of learning communities and cohorts along with activities that celebrate the cultural richness found on campuses. These learning communities must be more than symbolic, they must adhere to principles that build relationships among all stakeholders. Until colleges truly implement inclusive practices such as program offerings, diverse staffing, etc., students, especially minorities and disadvantaged students, will feel like outsiders which continues to be an obstacle (Bianco et al., 2011).

Another obstacle that was faced by African American males in the process of becoming teachers was feeling discouraged from pursuing rigorous courses. For decades, there has been an achievement gap between African American students and their white peers (Cormier, 2020; Thompson & Allen, 2012). Thompson and Allen (2012) conducted a study in which African American students reported that they did not believe their teachers prepared them for high stakes testing. A study conducted by Wynter-Hoyte et al. (2020) recommended that colleges, knowing the biased nature of standardized high stakes test, help African Americans develop study skills and strategies to overcome this obstacle. Moreover, knowing the biased nature of standardized high stakes testing, educators must continue to explore alternative assessment options for displaying proficiency to ensure there are no barriers to educational and career opportunities for students.

Along with feeling discouraged from pursuing rigorous courses, another obstacle faced by participants in the process of becoming teachers was isolation. Participants shared stories of

feeling isolated from their peers whether by not being invited to join study groups or lacking cultural experiences during their college years. Minority and first generation college students need assistance with assimilating to a new place and culture (Bianco et al., 2011). In reality, all students need assistance with assimilating to college and what that entails. The building of relationships overcome the obstacle of isolation. Wallace and Gagen (2019) advocate for the establishment of learning communities, cohorts, and activities connecting students to their colleges and communities. At the heart of what Wallace and Gagen and other researchers are advocating for is relationship building by acknowledging and respecting all stakeholders and what they bring to the community. Students are more than potential revenue and an identification number. Universities must put the business model aside and focus on building communities in which students feel welcomed and appreciated for who they are. Along with expanding facilities, athletics, and fundraising, relationship building must be a core goal of all universities. The number of minority or disadvantaged students enrolled at a university should not be the determining factor in developing learning communities that are welcoming, supportive, and embrace diversity in all its forms.

Isolation as an obstacle did not only affect participants in the study during their college years. Some participants recalled feeling isolated as novice teachers due to not having other African American educators in the buildings in which they worked. Being regulated to being the “disciplinarian” or not being viewed as a capable colleague were also shared by participants of the study. Colleges of education and school districts must help novice teachers learn how to use their personalities and experiences as teachers (Duncan, 2018). Similar to how Wallace and Gagen (2019) advocate for colleges to establish learning communities and activities connecting students to their communities, school districts must do the same for their teachers. Schools must

be seen as learning communities where relationship building is as important as the curriculum being taught in schools.

Research Question 3

How can teacher preparation programs prepare African American males to become successful teachers?

Teacher preparation programs prepare students regarding pedagogical and content specialization, but participants shared how these programs can better prepare future teachers, especially African American male teachers. One recommendation that participants shared was that teacher education programs need to provide students opportunities to complete field and student teaching experiences in diverse settings. Depending on the location of the college, some students will only have an opportunity to work in one type of setting such as urban, suburban or rural. According to Brown (2018), exposure to field experiences and student teaching in suburban districts improve the chances of African American males considering to apply for teaching positions in those districts.

Since *Brown v. Board of Education*, America's schools have remained largely segregated by race (Douglas et al., 2004; Saddler, 2005). After *Brown* was implemented, many white school districts did not hire qualified African American teacher in their newly segregated schools. As a result, minority teachers do not feel welcomed in suburban district to this day (Brown, 2018; Duncan, 2018). In order to remedy this, researchers and school districts have started to partner with civic and private donors to make communities more appealing to teaching candidates (Lynn, 2018; Ohio Department of Education, 2019). District recruiters in states such as California and Colorado, with high cost of living and popular tourist destinations, highlight

cultural experiences and opportunities in or near their districts along with stipends and rent subsidies for potential teaching candidates (Flannery, 2022).

Participants shared the stark differences they observed during their field and student teaching experiences. Whether it was facilities or technology, suburban schools always had better facilities and resources than their urban and rural counterparts. Although Brown was intended to overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson*'s "separate but equal", this has not come to fruition in many parts of the United States. As long as school funding models are based on property and income taxes, minority and economically disadvantaged communities will always get the short end of the stick due to lower wages and property values. All teacher candidates must have exposure to a variety of settings to truly understand America's educational system.

Many teaching candidates start their careers not truly understanding the reality of teaching. Regardless of where teaching candidates land their first position, there is a learning curve in regard to understanding the culture of the district and building, classroom management, accommodating students with special needs, and gaining autonomy as novice teachers. Studies have indicated that some African American males decided to pursue teaching as a career due to the negative experiences that their family and friends had in school (Pabon, 2016). There is a lot of research that speaks to students benefitting from staff that are culturally competent. Participants in the study shared that they also struggled with working in environments that lack cultural competence. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) have written extensively on how the culture and experiences of all stakeholders must be acknowledged and respected in educational settings.

School districts must understand that teachers also benefit from culturally competent environments. Participants shared stories of being designated as the building "disciplinarian" due

to the stereotypes associated with being an African American male. When every stakeholder's culture and experiences are valued in schools, students and staff will feel more welcomed and a part of the school community (Brockenbrough, 2014). To make this happen, schools must be intentional in getting to know its students and employees. This requires giving them a voice in regard to school initiatives and culture. If not, more future teachers, especially minority teachers, will share the sentiments of one of the participants in the study not feeling connected to colleagues beyond teaching responsibilities.

Conclusion

The participants of this study have shared with researchers and school districts their lived experiences regarding becoming teachers. The researcher used Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework for this study based on the CRT tenet of counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling allows "minoritized or marginalized groups to contribute their stories to the dominant culture narrative" (Goings, 2015, p. 101). This study contributes to the existing literature by giving voice to the lived experiences of African American male teachers who have been marginalized or absent in existing literature. From participants' experiences, researchers and school districts have been provided valuable insight regarding how to recruit future African American male teachers. There must be intentionality regarding how to recruit future African American male teachers starting as early as middle school and throughout their preservice teaching years.

The intentionality needed to create a pipeline of African American male teachers is founded on sound policies and programs. Middle and high schools must offer extracurricular clubs such as Educators Rising along with exploratory courses specifically focused on teaching. At the collegiate level, programs such as Clemson University's Call Me MISTER must be

replicated to ensure that African American males are supported academically, socially, culturally, and financially. And throughout schooling, African American males, like all students, must have quality educators who are engaging, culturally competent, and are knowledgeable of instructional best practices.

Regarding the obstacles that African American males have to overcome to become teachers, schools, especially colleges, must be mindful to have a support system in place to help students navigate college. Most colleges, especially predominately White institutions, do not have policies and programs that support African American men, such as the learning communities offered in previous literature. Universities such as Ohio University and Clemson University in South Carolina, are industry leaders in understanding the needs of their African American male students. Both have created learning communities with programming that research tells us lead to increased African American male student retention and graduation such as mentoring, providing cultural opportunities, and increasing diversity in curriculum and staffing.

Just because most freshman at colleges are considered legal adults does not mean that they have the ability to navigate or advocate for themselves. For years, the research has indicated that mentoring is effective in both retaining students and ensuring that they graduate from college (Hensell & Fiano, 2018, Miller & Endo, 2005, Reitman & Karge, 2019). Prior to arriving at college, high school teachers and counselors must encourage African American males to take rigorous college preparatory curriculum such as Advanced Placement courses. Grades and test scores must not serve as barriers to rigorous college preparatory curriculum for students. Early exposure to college level curriculum will better prepare students for college and beyond. Taking

honors and Advanced Placement courses will help to reinforce critical thinking and study skills needed as lifelong learners.

Now that I have this experience of interviewing these participants, I found my own story in the stories of these men. Their stories and mine affirmed what the existing literature suggests regarding the recruitment of African American male teachers. The theme of isolation, whether in college or as novice teachers, was shared among participants and the researcher. Being the only African American male in your classes or workplace can take a toll on a person. As a result of isolation and not having peers or colleagues that relate to your experience, some begin to doubt that they truly belong. As noted earlier in the study, all of the participants had advanced degrees. The pursuit of graduate study was not only due to valuing education and job promotion and security, but also to “prove” to themselves and others that they belonged. This is not true for all African American male teachers. Upon graduating Summa Cum Laude with my undergraduate degree, I knew that I was prepared to teach and would bring a needed perspective to the classroom. I never doubted my abilities or felt a need to prove myself to my colleagues. Similar to many of the participants, I also pursued my advanced degrees for job promotions and security; however, I had mentors that encouraged me to take advantage of the tuition reimbursement program that my district offered employees.

To increase the number of African American male teachers, researchers and school districts must engage in a paradigm shift. Due to the teaching profession being under attack in recent years along with a global pandemic, the number of people entering the profession has decreased in the United States of America (Carothers et al., 2019). The goal of increasing the number of African American male teachers must not be lost in the wider recruitment of teachers or else we will continue to have predominately white teachers teaching diverse learners. By

creating specific policies and programs that provide support to potential African American male teachers as discussed in this study, along with recruiting African American males who interact with youth but are not teachers such as coaches and paraprofessionals, will the U.S. begin to have the teaching workforce that more resembles its population.

Recommendations

Based on the data from this study and current literature regarding the recruitment of African American male teachers, there are some recommendations that stakeholders can use to increase the number of African American male teachers. First, the recruitment of African American males as future teachers should start as early as middle school. Various studies have shown districts that provide opportunities for African American males to explore the profession through exploratory courses, shadowing opportunities or joining extracurricular clubs such as Educators Rising are more successful with recruitment. It should be noted that none of the participants in the study recalled early recruitment efforts such as Educators Rising (formerly Future Teachers of America) or participating in exploratory career options focusing on the teaching profession. When stakeholders are committed to recruiting potential African American male teachers as early as they do for athletics, there will be an increase in the number of African American males considering teaching as a profession.

Second, schools must encourage African American males to participate in rigorous college preparatory curriculum and Advanced Placement (AP) courses that prepare students for college. Middle and high school teachers and guidance counselors must recruit African American males who display potential in various subject areas to take rigorous courses throughout high school. At most high schools in America, students, teachers, and parents provide input regarding course selection for the upcoming school year (Bianco et al., 2011; Cormier,

2020; Goings & Bianco, 2016). Teachers use grades and assessment data to make recommendations among other criteria. The role that teachers play in encouraging African American male students to pursue rigorous coursework in high school has contributed to the low number of African American males enrolled in honors and Advanced Placement courses.

Educators are taught to use data to drive instruction. Data must also be used as a basis for courageous conversations that seek to improve the number of African American males taking rigorous coursework. Schools must commit to changing policies and practices that serve as barriers for students, especially minorities and disadvantaged students, to access rigorous curricular opportunities. African American males, like all students, value the opinions of their educators regarding their future pursuits. In addition, students benefit from the knowledge attained in these rigorous courses in regard to preparation for teacher licensure exams and the wealth of knowledge they will bring to their classrooms and transfer to students.

The third recommendation for stakeholders looking to increase the number of African American male teachers is to look within their districts or organizations. There are African American males who work in school settings such as coaches and paraprofessionals who have the potential of being teachers if given the opportunity and support. Stakeholders must engage this population of African American males by showing the possibilities teaching provides and providing financial support for those interested in pursuing their teaching license. Across the U.S., colleges of education are experiencing declining enrollment due to a number of factors. Some school districts do not understand the wealth of resources they possess in terms of African American men affiliated with their districts. Progressive districts and stakeholders will explore options to help these potential teachers transition to the profession. After all, these are men who

have already displayed their commitment to our youth and their respective communities. They know how to engage students and want to help them reach their full potential.

Some of the participants in the study were motivated to become teachers by the coaches in their lives. Not all of the coaches that influenced participants were licensed teachers, but all of them possessed the passion to work with youth and knew how to engage them. Through the interviews, participants shared that some of their coaches were social workers and city workers such as garbage men. Although the professions of the coaches who were not educators were honorable and made contributions to society, one is left to question, if given the opportunity, would some of them consider teaching as a second career, especially if there were supports in place to assist with the transition.

Programs such as Clemson University's Call Me MISTER program and Ohio University's Brothers Rise program are considered models regarding providing support for potential African American male teachers. Both programs provide academic support, financial assistance, a cohort model for social and cultural support and job placement assistance. Having the opportunity to learn what teaching entails and discuss both challenges and successes they encountered throughout their preservice program will enable African American male teaching candidates to learn and grow with each other. Both Clemson and Ohio University are predominately White institutions; however, the programs that they have created for potential African American male teachers demonstrate that all higher education institutions can meet the academic, financial, and cultural needs of its students.

Future Research Opportunities

African American male teachers must be a part of the conversation regarding the recruitment of future African American male teachers. This study provided African American

male teachers an opportunity to share their lived experiences related to becoming teachers.

Future researchers can expand on this study by recruiting participants from various parts of the United States, especially the southern region of the United States where the majority of African Americans reside.

Knowing that collaboration between universities and school districts is instrumental in improving the number of African American male teachers, more research needs to be done on programs that are successfully recruiting African American males. In addition, future researchers can find African American males who did not complete their teacher education programs and explore the reasons why they did not. University and school district partnerships need to be studied more in depth with hopes of providing research based recommendations to recruit and retain African American male teachers. The data from this study indicates that African American males benefit from assistance with navigating college. Whether it is academic advising, financial assistance resources or providing social and cultural opportunities, colleges and districts that are committed to the needs of their students will be successful. Only through the collaboration of communities, universities, school districts, and civic organization can a sustained pipeline of African American male teachers in the United States of America be accomplished.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

Date: **August 26, 2022**

To: Dr. Diana Garlough

CC: Heath Horton

RE: Pathways to the Classroom for African American Males

Project Expiration date: August 26, 2023

The University of Findlay Institutional Review Board (IRB) has completed its review of your project utilizing human subjects and has granted authorization. This study has been approved for a period of one year only. The project has been assigned the number **1670**.

In order to comply with UF policy and federal regulations, human subject research must be reviewed by the IRB on at least a yearly basis. If you have not completed your research within the year, it is the investigator's responsibility to ensure that the **Progress Report** is completed and sent to the IRB in a timely fashion. The IRB needs to process the re-approval before the expiration date, which is printed above.

Please note that if any changes are made to the present study, you must notify the IRB immediately.

Understand that any proposed changes may not be implemented before IRB approval, in which case you must complete an **Amendment/Modification Report**.

Following the completion of the use of human subjects, the primary investigator must complete a **Certificate of Compliance form** indicating when and how many subjects were recruited for the study. Please refer to the IRB policy and procedures manual for additional information. Please include the project number on any other documentation or correspondence regarding the study.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact IRB at (419) 434-4640 or email irb@findlay.edu.

Sincerely,

Landon Bellavia, Ph.D.

Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Cc: IRB Office

Appendix B

Invitation To Participate In The Study

September 1, 2022

Re: Pathways to the Classroom for African American Males

Dear Cleveland Area Minority Educator Recruitment Association District Member:

I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a voluntary research study about the pathways that lead African American men to the teaching profession. This study is being conducted by Heath Horton at the University of Findlay.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are an African American male educator who has taught in the PreK-12 school setting or majored in education. Your name was obtained through your district being a member of the Cleveland Area Minority Educator Recruitment Association (CAMERA). Your participation is confidential and voluntary and you are free to answer any questions you'd like, to withdraw your consent and/or to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Participation includes consenting to be interviewed by the researcher using either an audio-taped, face-to-face interview or a recorded Zoom interview at a time and place of your convenience. The time commitment will take no longer than one hour. There will be no compensation for participating in this research study.

Please click [here](#) to read and digitally sign the **consent form** if you are interested in participating in the study. After signing the consent form, please save the consent form to your computer and email the document to Heath Horton at hortonh1@findlay.edu. Upon receiving the document, I will be in contact with you to answer any questions and set up the interview.

If you would like additional information about this study, please contact me at hortonh1@findlay.edu or 440-453-0882 or principal investigator Dr. Diana Garlough at diana.garlough@findlay.edu or 419-434-4867.

Thank you for your consideration, and once again, please do not hesitate to contact me if you are interested in learning more about this Institutional Review Board approved project.

Heath Horton
Doctoral Candidate
University of Findlay

Appendix C



Rocky River City School District

1101 Morewood Parkway • Rocky River • Ohio • 44116

440.356.6003 • Gifford.Samuel@rrcs.org • www.rrcs.org

Samuel Gifford, Executive Director of Human Resources and Facilities Operations

MEMORANDUM

To: Institutional Review Board, University of Findlay

From: Mr. Samuel Gifford, Cleveland Area Minority Educator Recruitment Association (CAMERA) Leadership Committee Member; Executive Director of Human Resources, Facilities Operations and Support Services, Rocky River City School District

Re: Heath Horton's request to utilize CAMERA districts for his research study

Date: July 11, 2022

As a leadership committee member of the Cleveland Area Minority Educator Recruitment Association (CAMERA), Mr. Horton has made me aware of the details of his study on the recruitment of African American male teachers. The objective of Mr. Horton's study aligns with the organizations mission to increase the number of minority teachers in northeast Ohio. Mr. Horton is welcome to access members of CAMERA districts to recruit participants for his study. If you have any questions, please contact me at Gifford.Samuel@rrcs.org or 440-356-6000.

Sincerely,

Samuel Gifford

Appendix D

Research Questions

- 1. What motivates African American males to become teachers?**
- 2. What obstacles are faced by African American males in the process of becoming teachers?**
- 3. How do teacher preparation programs prepare African American males to become successful teachers?**

Interview Questions

- 1. Could you tell me about your experience with having African American male teachers in your PK-12 schooling?**

(Research Question 1)

- 2. What lead you to decide to become a teacher?**

(Research Question 1)

- 3. In your teacher preparation program, in what ways did you feel supported?**

(Research Questions 2 and 3)

- 4. What are some of the areas you would have liked more support in?**

(Research Questions 2 and 3)

5. What are some benefits of being an African American teacher?

(Research Question 1)

6. What are some challenges of being an African American teacher?

(Research Question 2)

7. Do you believe that you have a role in recruiting African American male teachers?

If so, how?

(Research Question 1)

8. What are some examples of things that you have done in the past to recruit more African American men to the profession?

(Research Question 2)

9. What recommendations would you offer to colleges and school districts to increase the number of African American male teaching candidates?

(Research Questions 2 and 3)