A Case Study of the Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators: Career Choices and Experiences in Secondary Schools

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A CASE STUDY OF THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE EDUCATORS: CAREER CHOICES AND EXPERIENCES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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M.S., Jackson State University
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I would like to start off by giving all glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for guiding and watching over me during this journey. I want to dedicate my dissertation to my family because without their support, I would not have been able to complete this dissertation. I want to thank my wonderful wife, Chante’, handsome son, Aiden, and beautiful daughter, Ansley, for the endless motivation, sacrificing of time, and overwhelming support throughout this process. You guys prayed over me and kept my spirits high at times when I became discouraged and upset. Next, I would like to thank my parents Anthony Graham Sr. and Lavern Graham, for the foundation laid. As parents, you provided me with a sense of pride, purpose, and instilled in me the drive to achieve at whatever I put my mind to. You guys made a ton of sacrifices for me to be successful and I am indebted to you all forever. I love you guys. I would like to thank both of my grandmothers, Rosie Dickson and Dr. Barbara Grayson. You two were an extension of my parents and consistently prayed for me, motivated me, and uplifted my spirits any time I questioned if I could achieve any task.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to examine the career choices and experiences of African American male teachers in secondary grade settings. Participants included 17 African American males who taught core subjects at varying grade levels. All participants worked at schools in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, metropolitan area. The main source of data collection was completed through semistructured interviews with 17 African American male teachers. I arranged to visit the different schools and address all potential teachers interested in participating in this study. Additionally, I contacted all interested subjects through email. The findings provided important information related to improving the percentage of African American educators. The case study was framed by critical race theory, antideficit achievement theory, and career choice framework.
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The education system in the United States is tasked with the job of preparing students to become productive citizens; however, many students do not reach this status in society, and of those students, large portion are underrepresented minorities (Gay, 2013). One reason minority students may not succeed in school is due to the lack of representation of people who look like them. Researchers have claimed African American males have an important place in education, particularly schools where African American male students attend (Watson & Smitherman, 2016). Each year, African American students withdraw from school or never attend college due to low academic preparation (Bowman, 2014). Such a small percentage of African American males in the education field may contribute to African American students having low academic achievement levels (Gay, 2013).

Importantly, only 8–10% of U.S. educators do not identify as White, whereas 33% of the students in U.S. schools are African American (Howard, 2011, p. 2). Public school populations continue to increase in diversity, but teachers in the front of classrooms continue to mostly be White (West, 2013). To help shift this demographic, African American males are needed in education. Sadly, attracting them to become teachers is extremely challenging because African American men have historically viewed teaching as a job that does not pay well and is a job for women (Banks, 2016).

In the United States, protests have occurred since the prevalent murders of African American men by police like George Floyd, Michael Brown, and Alton Sterling with increasing vigor because of the mistreatment of African Americans and other underrepresented minorities. African Americans are often faced with low academic standards and low socioeconomic status, which has almost become a trademark in the African American community (Elias & Haynes,
This is but a portion of the experiences Black people have in the U.S. that are perpetuated because of racial practices (Bell, 2013). Within the United States, demographics of marginalized populations have increased; this same shift has taken place in the U.S. education system. Although U.S. school demographics have constantly changed, the education field has not (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015).

During the decade from 1993–2003, more racial minority students started attending public schools. Sixty-four percent of students who attended public schools during that timeframe were Hispanic; 23% were African American; and 11% were Asian (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005). In the same decade, the percentage of White students attending public schools declined (Fry, 2006). During the last 2 decades, there has been an increase of minorities attending public schools to the point that they outnumber the majority U.S. public school student population (Fry, 2006; NCES, 2015; O’Hare, 2011).

Most researchers have revealed that schools with Black student populations need African American male teachers (Hines & Hines, 2020). Even at schools without African American students, African American male teachers are needed to give students from different backgrounds a positive viewpoint of African American males (Salinas, 2012). African American male teachers provide important images of success; they also break negative stereotypes and can serve as a figure to which all students look up (Bolich, 2012). Within the education field, many teachers have begun to retire with no one to replace them (Gonzalez, 2021). If society values students’ academic success and interactions with great educators, it is vital that African American males enter and stay in the education field.

When examining secondary level public schools in the U.S., the amount of African American male educators is not equal to changing student demographics (Andrews, 1993;
Anyon, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Delpit, 1994; Freedman et al., 1999; Irvine, 2003; Sulentic Dowell, 2008). Even though African American males are not required for African American students to succeed, having them in schools can provide leadership for all students (Hunter-Boykin, 2012).

**Background of the Study**

The United States is a mixture of many different cultures; however, the U.S. education system does not reflect this image. The education field is dominated by White females who comprise 79% of PK–12 teachers (Meckler & Rabinowitz, 2019, p. 3). Women make up 84% of teachers and men make up the remaining 16% (NCES, 2018, p. 67). Statistics show representation of gender and racial diversity of teachers is not on par with the diversity of the students. African American male students hardly ever learn from someone who looks like them within the school setting, or who understands their culture or background while in class (Gardener et al., 2014). This concept, borrowed from the field of children’s literature, is referred to as *windows and mirrors*—that is, seeing oneself reflected in educational settings and perceiving a role model reflective of oneself as a goal to attain (Botelho & Rudman, 2009).

Although other student populations are underrepresented, African American males are most notably absent from the teaching profession. African American males comprise 21 million people in the United States and make up 48% of the total African American population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). African American males comprise 6–7% of the population in the United States, (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018) whereas they constitute fewer than 2% of teachers (NCES, 2013). Mitchell (2010) attributed African American male teachers not being present in large numbers due to several factors. These factors included (a) bad experiences as a PK–12 student, (b) low salary, and (c) views of teaching as a job for women.
Until the education field becomes more diverse, minority students will continue to face challenges when it comes to academic success. Public school personnel strive to have their students attain postsecondary education, along with providing them with a well-rounded experience. By not having African American male teachers in a school, students miss out on the impact they can have on students from all backgrounds (Pipho, 2018).

**Statement of the Problem**

There is not a definite understanding of why African American males select the teaching field. History has shown African Americans were not afforded the opportunity to pursue a career in teaching (Lewis, 2006). With a plethora of career options, the amount of African American males who become teachers has decreased (Hill, 2015). With fewer African American males becoming teachers, fewer African American students subsequently have someone who looks like them in front of their classroom. The multicultural classroom, which has been around since at least 1975, constructs a need for educators who are mindful of different cultures among students, including “differences that affect learning styles, behavior, mannerisms, and relationships with school and home” (Skylarz, 2013, p. 22).

Martinez (2017) contended the underrepresentation of African American male educators to provide someone for African American students to look up to could “contribute to the underachievement of African American students, provide little incentive for African American students to advance in school and negatively affect their career and life aspirations” (p. 24).

What remained unknown is what influences African American males to choose the education field. It also remains unclear what African American males think about their existence in the teaching profession. African American students are sometimes overrepresented in many unfavorable aspects of education, such as suspensions, expulsions, and overrepresentation in
special education (Cartledge, 2014; Schott Foundation, 2010; Simmons-Reed, 2014). Research has shown that when schools have a large representation of African American men, African American male students have greater academic outputs, have fewer disciplinary issues, and less special education referrals (Underwood, 2019).

Gershenson et al. (2017) discovered when African American students who were below the poverty line had just one African American male educator in their grade school educational journey, the student gained a better chance of graduating high school and pursuing postsecondary education. The researchers studied around 100,000 African American students who came into third grade in North Carolina public schools between 2001–2005. Around 13% of the students who did not have an African American male teacher dropped out or had no plans beyond high school; however, African American students who had an African American male teacher in the third, fourth, or fifth grade were 29% more likely to attend college.

When African American students have educators who do not look similar to them, these teachers can sometime project racism, negative stereotypes, microaggressions, and low academic expectations, potentially causing African American students to struggle in school (Hughes, 2005; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Lynn, 2006). Acknowledging this dynamic during 20th century was civil rights pioneer, Woodson (2000), who said, “The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he entered and in almost every book he studies” (p. 2). Having an African American male in the classroom has shown to impact African American male students’ behavior (Cartledge & Simmons-Reed, 2014). Students can gain many benefits by having a teacher who shares the same cultural and racial background with them (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Thompson (2007) echoed this finding, saying, “Having someone that looks like them and that can relate to them culturally instills in each child that education is important to
everyone . . . regardless of your background, you can be respected and accomplish many things” (p. 10). When African American male students see an African American male teacher in an authoritative position, students are provided an uplifting image of an African American leader, leading to motivation for academic achievement (Hughes, 2010).

The purpose of this intrinsic case study (Mohan, 2021) was to examine the career choices and experiences of African American male teachers in secondary grade settings. This study sought to discover what attracts African Americans to the teaching profession, what keeps them in the profession, and how school personnel can attract more African American males into education. Because researchers have previously explored some of the causes behind decreased numbers of African American male educators, learning from those who are still educators provided valuable information on how to develop more opportunities for African American male teachers. Participants were African American males who taught core subjects at secondary grade levels. The main source of data came from individual interviews. The following research questions directed the study:

1. What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to enter and stay in the teaching profession?

2. What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to disaffiliate from the teaching profession?

3. What do African American male teachers believe about why there is an underrepresentation of African American males in the teaching profession?

Through a case study research design, the experiences of African American male teachers were captured and shared. Through semistructured interviews, the data provided important information associated with improving the amount of African American teachers. The
information collected can be used by secondary education leaders to improve diversity in education.

Increased representation of African American male teachers could provide solutions for low academic expectation and disciplinary issues many African American students face. Research shows when African American male students have teachers from different backgrounds, they receive more disciplinary actions (Foster, 2016). Studies have also shown over the last 4 decades, African American male student suspensions have increased as the number of African American male teachers decreased (Kinsler, 2009). When African American pupils have daily encounters with teachers who share the same racial background, results indicate a reduction in discipline problems and an increase in academic expectations (Foster, 2016).

Although some stakeholders may think having a quality teacher should be all any student needs to be successful, I have a different opinion. I believe it is important all students have the opportunity to learn from someone who can share the same racial and gender background. I feel having an African American male educator increases academic output of all students and provides a positive impact on the entire school.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Three frameworks undergirded this study: critical race theory, antideficit theory, and the career choice framework.

**Critical Race Theory**

This case study on African American male teacher career choices and experiences was framed by critical race theory (CRT; Bell, 1970). CRT highlights the effects of race on one’s social standing (Bodenheimer, 2019). Although “race” as a notion is a social construction and
not rooted in biology, race has profound effects for African American in terms of professional opportunities, education, and financial resources. The CRT framework was fitting for analyzing the underrepresentation of African American male teachers. CRT identifies that racism is embedded in U.S. culture (Krenshaw, 1995). African Americans who face low expectations and racial oppression are ingrained in the history of the United States (Hughes, 2015; MacLeod, 2019; Tatum, 2013; Williams, 2014; Woodson, 2018). CRT highlights the power structures that direct U.S. education, law, and other facets based on White privilege, which bolsters oppression of underrepresented minorities (Delgado et al., 2001). CRT also looks to provide an equal voice to all groups of people (Stovall, 2005). Stovall (2005) described CRT as “educational protest, as well as scholarship intended to provide new insight and opportunity for educational praxis” (p. 197). CRT gives a voice to marginalized groups and allows their specific stories and experiences to be heard.

**Antideficit Framework**

This case study also used antideficit achievement theory to frame this study. Harper (2010, 2012) developed antideficit achievement framework to gain an understanding on African American males who were able to successfully maneuver through the science, technology, education, and math (STEM) postsecondary pipeline. With the development of Harper’s (2012) antideficit framework, he showed a desire to consider Black male students “to counteract the popular one-sided emphasis on failure and low-performing Black male undergraduates . . . with insights gathered from those who somehow manage to navigate their way to and through higher education” (p. 2).

Antideficit achievement framework focuses on precollege preparedness, college achievement, and postcollege achievement. Precollege preparedness focus on aspects that direct
pupils to pursue higher education. Family, experiences in high school, and other adolescent experiences for college are factors that can determine precollege readiness. College achievement focus on a student’s experiences and motivations to graduate. Postcollege achievement measures a student’s desired to enter graduate school (Harper, 2012).

Antideficit achievement framework related to this study because it focused on African American males’ success as a teacher. I explored African American males who remained in teaching longer than 2 years and pinpointed what motivated them to continue to stay rather than seeking other opportunities. The antideficit framework provides a lens that avoids focusing on what is wrong with students who are failing, but instead asks what African American males who see success are doing right. This viewpoint allowed for this study to focus on African American teachers who have had success teaching.

**Career Choice Framework**

A third framework used in this study was Holland’s (1959) career choice framework. Holland (1996) believed selecting a career that suits an individual’s personality is important to having a successful career. Holland’s career choice framework also categorizes people based on the type of work they are most interested in (Arnold, 2004). Holland claimed people have three dominant types known as the dominant code. The main idea behind the dominant code is people would use their dominant type to find a career that fits their personality. The career choice theory bounded to this study because this theory is based on people selecting careers that fit their personality. Many African American males who remain teachers choose to because they want to provide a role model or make a positive impact in the community. Career choice theory provided a viewpoint on the reasons African American males select a career as an educator, and their job satisfaction while serving as teachers.
**Definitions of Terms**

To gain an understanding of the research problem and the literature, it is important to highlight and define frequently used terms and concepts that are used all through this paper.

*Academic performance* is the output that pupils showcase in education (Bonneville Power Administration, 2014).

*Achievement gap* is the difference in academic achievement among different racial groups of students. (Education Week, 2014).

*African American* is a descendant of an enslaved person who was brought from their African homeland by force to work in the western world (Merriam-Webster, 2010).

*Black* is a person who has dark pigmentation of the skin (Merriam-Webster, 2010).

*Core courses* are a series of courses that students must complete before they can advance to the next stage in their education. At the secondary level, a core course includes English, math, science, and social studies (Education Reform, 2013).

*Latino* is a native or inhabitant of Latin America, and also a person of Latin American origin (Merriam-Webster, 2010).

*Role model* is someone whose behavior or achievements can be imitated by other people (Dictionary, 2010).

*Secondary education* in the United States is the schooling offered after primary school (i.e., Grades K–5) and before higher, optional education (University of the People, 2021).

*Students of color* are student populations that are not of White or European backgrounds (IGI-Global, 2020).

*White* is a someone who has origins in Europe and possesses White pigmentation of the skin (Farlex, 2010).
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this case study was to examine the career choices and experiences of African American male teachers in secondary grade settings. This research project aimed to further understanding for the need of African American male teachers in secondary grade level schools. Also, this study aimed to explore why there remains an underrepresentation of African American male teachers at the secondary level, and why the African American males who are teachers stay in the profession. This study is important because the information collected can be used to help improve the percentage of African American males who become teachers; moreover, these findings could help with retention of the current African American male teachers.

Historical Underpinnings and Ramifications of Slavery in the United States

Slavery and historical oppression have had an immense influence on the educational experiences and outcomes of African Americans in the 21st century. Throughout history, African Americans have been subject to various forms of oppression and discrimination, such as school and neighborhood segregation and acts of violence, affecting their pursuit of the American dream. Modern forms of discrimination, such as implicit bias and institutionalized racism continue to impact the personal and educational success of African Americans. Examining historical barriers and current obstacles faced by African American help explain the reasons why so few African American men become teachers. Historically, slaves were not permitted to learn how to read or write and all slave states prohibited the education of slaves. Laws preventing the education of slaves (Coleman, 2021) was extremely punitive; if a White person was caught teaching a slave to read or write, they could be fined hundreds of dollars, whereas the slave could be subjected to severe whippings from their master. If slaves could write, they would be able to
spread abolitionist information, form rebellions, and even more frightening to slave owners, they could forge fake travel passes. The education of slaves was so feared throughout the South that many state lawmakers passed legislation declaring freed African Americans had to leave the state. Such legislation was used to prohibit them from initiating uprisings or educating those who were still slaves (Alexander, 2010). Restricting slaves’ education and communication was a potent factor in controlling slaves and has significantly impacted the ongoing education of African Americans.

Despite laws against educating slaves, many slaves made an effort to become educated in “Pit” schools (Williams, 2005) which were actual pits dug into the ground and deep in the woods—far from the surveillance of overseers and slave masters. Pit schools were taught by slaves who knew how to read or write (Williams, 2005), and were the main form of education for African American throughout slavery. Although rare, some slaves were given the opportunity to learn these skills alongside their slave master’s children. These slaves would then share their knowledge with other African Americans. African Americans who could read and write were held in high regard (Jenkins, 2002). The ability to write was seen as a symbol of status; many individuals felt reading was an unnecessary skill for slaves and even poor White people. Slaves were so eager to learn that some would even hide small spelling books in their hats, and given a moment of opportunity, would practice spelling words (Williams, 2005).

During the peak of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln declared all slaves would be free with the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. This legislation was a major setback for the Confederate war effort, as slaves were used to support the war by digging trenches, preparing meals for soldiers, and manufacturing supplies (Covey & Eisnach, 2014). Reactions were mixed among the slaves. Some chose to stay and support the war, whereas others sought
freedom or joined with the Union Army. In 1865, the war was over, and the Union had won. Later that year, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution was passed, formally abolishing slavery in the United States. After the Civil War, African American were officially freed, but the government had minimal plans in place to help build the African American community. Most African American families were without land, jobs, or homes. To help African Americans, General Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15. This order was designed to redistribute portions of Southern land, mainly in South Carolina and Georgia, to former slaves (Birnbaum & Taylor, 2000). Vacated lands of former slave owners were given to the newly freed African Americans; however, this order created uproar and was revoked by President Andrew Johnson after the assassination of President Lincoln (American Social History Project/Center for Media & Learning, 2022).

**Post-Slavery Education**

Despite continued setbacks, African American strove to build their new lives as free persons. Many African American sought education by building and operating their own schools. They were supported by a government agency, the Freedman’s Bureau, which was developed to aid former slaves. Along with northern missionaries, the Freedman’s Bureau recruited teachers, rented buildings, provided transportation, books, and military protection from White supremacists (Butchart, 2012).

The first schools were crowded and overfilled as children and adults burned with the desire to learn. Both African American and White teachers were recruited from the North, and many of the African American teachers from the North graduated from postsecondary schools such as Oberlin College, Wilberforce University, and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania (Butchart, 2012). With nearly 4 million newly freed African Americans zealous for an education,
teachers were in high demand. The Freedman’s Bureau, along with support services, helped expand availability of education to former slaves. For example, to address the educator shortage in Alabama, former slaves Savery and Torrant—with assistance from General Swayne of the Freedman’s Bureau—founded the first normal college to educate African American primary school teachers (Harvy, 2010), which later became Talladega College. In addition, the Freedman’s Bureau established many Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), such as Fisk University, Clark Atlanta University, Southern University, and most notably, Howard University, located in Washington, D.C. These universities continue to operate today.

In 1837, there was only one HBCU. By 1973, that number rose to more than 100 HBCUs. The decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) laid the foundation to further development of postsecondary learning opportunities for African Americans. According to Fleming (2014), “The majority of Black public colleges, then, evolved out of state desires to avoid admitting Blacks to existing White institutions” (p. 5). Southern University, for instance, is located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Southern University is the country’s only HBCU system. The system includes five campuses in three of Louisiana’s largest cities. Southern University has been critical in the postsecondary education attainment of countless African American men and women in the state of Louisiana and beyond.

**Independent and HBCU**

Southern African American churches implemented their own elementary and secondary education programs. These programs prepared their African American pupils for vocational careers or higher education. As a result, the programs fostered increased demand for higher education. The programs especially created a need for educational institutes to prepare teachers to work in African American schools. Between 1930–1960, the University of Islam formed two
Independent Black Institutions (IBIs) (Butchart, 1980). IBIs were responsible for providing African American students with instruction and counseling focused on self-awareness (Muhammad & Rashid, 1992). This great feat created the opportunity for 5 million children to enter careers as educators, physicians, attorneys, engineers, businesspeople, and military leaders (Hill, 2015). HBCUs have contributed an exceptional chapter in the story of the U.S. higher education history (Brown, 1999; Davis, 1998; King, 1993). Even with immense challenges these institutions encountered, there are currently 107 HBCUs active. This number represents 3% of the total of higher education institutions in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Academic researchers have continued to acquire a new interest in HBCUs. Even though African American students can decide to attend any postsecondary institution, many still choose to enroll in an HBCU (Davis, 2018). Although HBCUs have accomplished remarkable strides, it is imperative to continually explore the distinctive marks they contribute to postsecondary education.

Since the founding of the first HBCU, there has been a recurring question of how these institutions fit into the greater structure of higher education (Brown, 1999). When the United States had stern and legal segregation, HBCUs served as “islands of hope” where African American citizens could become educated without the fear (Franklin, 1980). The central principle of HBCUs was to simply teach African Americans. From 1865–1950, HBCUs were nearly the only institutions to do so. The vast bulk of HBCUs opened after 1865 to train newly freed slaves and prevent newly freed slaves from enrolling into existing White institutions (Hill, 1985).
Jeanes Foundation

From 1908 to the 1960s, the Jeanes Foundation—also known as the Negro Rural School Fund—aided higher education and vocational programs for African Americans in rural areas (Wright, 1933). This foundation was established by a Philadelphia Quaker named Anna T. Jeanes. Anna T. Jeanes was born in 1822 and was the last surviving member of her family, so she was able to inherit the family’s wealth. She financed The Friends Boarding House, a home for elderly people who were ill, and she lived there before she passed away in 1907. Before her death, she left money for many nonsectarian programs. One of these programs is known as the Jeanes Fund, which provided support for African American education up to 1968.

A couple years before she passed, Anna Jeanes was approached by Dr. Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee and President of Hampton Institute to see if she could provide financial assistance to their universities. Anna Jeanes expressed interest in both schools, but she felt the larger schools had received enough financial help. Anna Jeanes wanted to help the small country schools, so she provided 1 million dollars to supply a program to help with education in tiny rural African American schools.

The Jeanes Foundation provided the method to employ African Americans in rural communities. Educators in the program were called Jeanes supervisors or Jeanes agents (Jones, 1933). These educators had a broad range of subjects they could teach based on needs of their community. The Jeanes educators had an amazing impact on the people they encountered in the community.

Brown v. Board of Education

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas that separate education for African Americans in public schools was unconstitutional
because separate facilities are unequal. This outcome ended segregation in public schools and higher education. States were mandated to demolish practices of segregation in education. This ruling obliged predominantly White institutions (PWIs) to enroll African American students for the first time (Freeman, 2009). HBCUs offer a unique educational experience for African Americans. African American students who enroll in HBCUs graduate at greater rates than African American students at PWIs (Chiles, 2017). African American students receive additional academic and social assistance in the HBCU setting.

Many years later, public HBCUs and African American students in the United States became the recipients of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling. The Supreme Court’s ruling of “separate but equal” education was anything but equal and meant state leaders would have to provide better investment to HBCUs and require PWIs to allow African American students to attend (Fultz, 2003). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave the federal government greater power to enforce desegregation. Decades after *Brown v. Board of Education*, the U.S. educational system continues to be filled with inequitable opportunities for marginalized populations. Unlike the 1950s, when race was the main factor of disparities in education, several researchers have concurred that the disparities are a concentration of multiple factors that shape these circumstances (Benitez, 2016; Strayhorn, 2007).

With desegregation taking place in schools in the 1960s, many established African American schools vanished or were merged with PWIs. Although integration had become law, a lot of White parents declined to allow their children to be taught by African American educators (Dougherty, 1998). Due to this situation, there was a mass departure of African Americans from the education field.
One of the longest continuously litigated segregation cases in the United States occurred in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The case of *Davis v. East Baton Rouge Parish* (1967) demanded the desegregation of the East Baton Rouge (EBR) Parish school system, originally filed in court on February 29, 1956. After proceeding through several legal maneuvers and proceedings, the court on May 25, 1960, entered an order enjoining the EBR Parish School Board and other defendants, and those acting in concert with them, from requiring segregation of the races in any school under their supervision, and from engaging in any and all action that limited or affected the admission to, attendance in, or education of plaintiffs or any other African American child situated in schools under the defendants jurisdiction (*Davis v. East Baton Rouge Parish*, 1967). This case played a pivotal role in White Flight in Baton Rouge, the building of newer schools in more affluent White neighborhoods, and the opening of more private schools (Harris, 2019).

Prior to the Civil War, there was no formal public educational system, meaning wealthy White families made up the majority of educated individuals. Reconstruction in the South produced the first form of public education in many areas that benefited newly freed slaves, and ironically, poor White people. Before the war, many areas lacked funding for education; after the war, funding allotted for education increased throughout the South (Harvey, 2010). Schools were state funded, but most White people were opposed to having their tax dollars allocated to Black schools (Butchart, 2012); thus, African American schools received little support from states compared to White schools. This divergence of funding meant African American schools were mostly self-sustaining, where teachers and community leaders oversaw school upkeep and maintenance. As for wages, both African American and White teachers who taught at African American schools earned less than teachers at the White schools (Butchart, 2012). Students and teachers from the African American schools were not deterred by these challenges. The students
embraced the idea of learning, asking for longer hours of schooling and less vacation time (Williams, 2015). Many students would walk for miles, often barefoot and in tattered clothes, just to attend class. These students often became teachers at home, being one of the first generations to become literate. Williams (2015) noted former slaves perceived the role of a teacher as a critical occupation for building self-sufficient communities and that teaching attracted both men and women.

**The Black Codes**

In 1866, the Black codes were passed. These codes were created to control the African American population in terms of economic advancement. The Black codes restricted African Americans from owning property and essentially forced them into a system of agricultural labor to ensure a labor force for the Southern economy (Brown & Stentifold, 2018). Under these codes, African Americans were forced to work off debt through labor contracts and were even thrown in jail for not showing proof of employment. Punishment for unemployment included working on a plantation for no wages. Other restrictions under the codes included preventing African Americans from congregating in large groups to prevent an uprising, strict curfews, and the inability to own guns or sell alcohol. The Black codes were short lived due to the blatantly discriminatory nature of the laws. These laws brought on opposition from the federal government and even some White southerners (Brown & Stentifold, 2018); however, in areas with little protection, Black codes remained in effect. Black codes essentially paved the way for the Jim Crow era.

In 1866, the 14th Amendment was passed. African Americans in the South were deemed citizens of the United States and were provided with equal protection under the law. This passage granted African American men the right to vote and run for public office, but women were still
prohibited from these privileges. During this period of radical reconstruction, hundreds of African American men served in various forms of public office, such as senators, congressmen, and other local officials. This newfound opportunity was vigorously opposed by many White Americans, especially White democrats who had fought for the Confederate contingent. The constant threat of violence and little-to-no protection from the federal government allowed White southerners to keep African American legislators out of government. In 1869, the 15th Amendment was passed, officially granting African American men the right to vote. However, voting restrictions, as well as violence and intimidation from White supremacist groups (e.g., the Ku Klux Klan [KKK]) remained a deterrent for African American men to vote and run for office. In many Southern states, voting restrictions included literacy tests, poll taxes, and the requirement that one’s grandfather must have been able to vote. Some states also required that a person had to own land to vote. These laws also disenfranchised poor White people, as many of them also did not own land.

**Desegregation of U.S. Schools**

Southern schools remained segregated for decades. During the African American push for equal rights in the 1950s and 1960s, the issue of segregated schools in the South reached a turning point with the 1954 Supreme Court case, *Brown v. The Board of Education* (1954). A landmark decision ruled that laws establishing separate public schools by race were unconstitutional, thereby overturning the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling. Integration of schools was not easy, though. There was great opposition to integration and some school districts were defiant in complying with the ruling. African American students were often met with harsh treatment when they attempted to attend the newly integrated schools. In Little Rock, Arkansas, for instance, due to the threat of violence, the army had to be called to escort nine African
American students who were the first to integrate Little Rock’s Central High School in 1957 (Little Rock Nine Foundation, 2011).

**Desegregation and Implications on Teaching Profession**

An unforeseen effect of desegregation was the impact it had on African American teachers. In 1950, it was estimated that one half of all African American professionals in the United States were teachers (Irvine, 2012); however, when the schools became integrated, many African American schools were closed down and many African American students left the African American schools and started to attend predominately White schools. White students were not integrated into the African American schools, resulting in many African American teachers losing their jobs (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014). Between 1954 and 1972, nearly 40,000 African American teachers lost their jobs in 17 Southern states. In Arkansas, for instance, virtually no African American teachers were hired from 1958–1968 in desegregated districts. Desegregation played a significant part in the decline of African American men’s presence in education, but there remain many reasons why African American males do not choose careers in teaching. For example, teaching started as a male-dominated field; yet, over the years, teaching has become a predominately female profession. African American males are more likely to seek opportunities perceived as more masculine or that provide higher pay, such as business, law, or medicine. In addition, the lack of African American males in teaching careers means young African American males are not exposed to teachers who look like them and emphasize the importance of mastering academics. Instead, young African American are exposed to African American entertainers, star athletes, and other noneducator-related fields.

For many young African American males faced with hardships of poverty, socioeconomic status influences their life decisions. For instance, living in an urban
neighborhood with high rates of violence leaves a young African American child susceptible to taking on the street life rather than pursuing education. They witness “fast money” and status through the selling of drugs and the formation of gangs. Their experience of poverty is closely linked to the history of oppression previously described. Predominately African American communities continue to experience acts of systematic oppression, such as a lack of funding provided to these school districts. Students are faced with insufficient school supplies and teachers who are overwhelmed with the realities of poverty these children face.

Achievement Gap

The achievement gap between African American and White students is measured in tested areas of the curriculum and suggests African American students perform lower than their White peers (McDonough, 2010). With diversity in schools, there are going to be achievement gaps with students. Factors such as different genders, different ethnicities, socioeconomic status, and a student’s primary language are some reasons why an achievement gap persists among students. Also, history has shown African American students have attended underfunded schools that do not have the best quality of teachers compared to White students (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). With schools consistently becoming more diverse, closing the achievement gap is becoming more difficult—and the education field itself is not diversifying at the same rate.

A teacher’s viewpoint on life affects the way the teacher relates to their students. To meet the needs of African American students, a teacher would have to be aware of the cultural background and experiences of African American students. An African American male teacher can relate to the African American students and understand their cultural background. African American male teachers also have higher academic expectations for their African American students.
**Bias and African American Students**

Throughout U.S. history, African Americans have been subject to various forms of oppression and discrimination, such as segregation, standardized testing, and structural inequality. These forms of oppression have impacted their ability to achieve maximum potential. Negative educational experiences, such as the high rate of discipline among African American students in the academic setting, have deterred many from selecting education as a career. In addition, implicit forms of bias continue to influence how African American students are perceived and treated. Racial stereotypes and other structural barriers also play a role in African American males’ experience, which continues to factor in the low percentage of African American male educators (Chin et al., 2020).

The integration of public schools was meant to bring equality among White and African American students; however, African American males have struggled to succeed in the U.S. educational system that, in many cases, is still not equal. Low graduation rates—sometimes less than 50%—along with issues related to discipline problems in the school environment are two prominent issues that impact African American students. For example, Lewin (2012) concluded African American males are 3.5 times more likely to face suspension or expulsion from school compared to White students. In this study, five African American boys and 10 African American girls received out-of-school suspension. In addition, Mendez (2013) conducted a study at a west Central Florida School District that analyzed rates of suspension by race and gender. To conduct this study, the researcher interviewed administration and student support personnel at 24 schools in the district (Mendez, 2013). Mendez posited that African American men and women had higher rates of suspension than both White and Latino men and women. The majority of these
Suspensions were for minor infractions, such as disobedience or insubordination. According to the researchers, this trend is representative of many school districts throughout the United States.

**School Discipline**

School discipline is one of the most crucial topics dealing with African American male students (Monroe, 2006). Looking at the past 3 decades of public-school disciplinary data, African American males are disciplined “at rates that far surpass their statistical representation” (Monroe, 2006, p. 103) in the U.S. secondary public school system. With this occurrence of school discipline, teachers who are not African American are more likely to discipline African American male students, even when students of other ethnic groups commit similar behavior infractions (Emihovich 2003; McCadden, 2008; Schott Foundation, 2010). This disparity in disciplinary action based on race is noteworthy for several reasons. When African American male students have discipline issues, this obstacle can lead to them dropping out of school and not wanting to select teaching as a career (Cotner et al., 2011; Irvine, 2009).

With increased suspensions, research suggests some teachers are biased against African American male students (Danilava, 2018). A study was done to investigate teacher attitudes toward African American and White students who committed behavior infractions. Participants in the project were asked to propose disciplinary action for students by looking at a referral slip with the student’s behavior infraction. The referral slip that had a name more traditional to African Americans received a harsher punishment than names more traditional to White students (Eberhardt & Okonofua, 2015). This study showed the excessive disciplinary actions and negative stereotypes African American students face.
Differential Treatment

Banks and Banks (2009) believed U.S. classrooms are environments embedded with racial and cultural bias. Hinchey (2006) posited White teachers brought up and trained in a racially biased system bring those racial prejudices and biases into the classroom setting. Anderson-Clark et al. (2008) examined data from a national sample to determine whether race or ethnic identity affected how African American and White teachers rated students’ specific skillsets. The researchers uncovered little variance between how African American and White teachers rated their students’ social behaviors; however, differences arose when White teachers rated their African American students lower than their White students on leadership skills, social skills, and social desirability.

A struggle many African American male students face is also their overrepresentation in special education classes. Studies have suggested African American students are much more likely to be put in special education classes or be labeled with emotional or behavioral disabilities (Gilliam, 2005; Harry et al., 2005). In 2008, the U.S. Department of Education discovered African American children were 2.28 times more likely than children from other racial or ethnic backgrounds are placed in special education due to externalizing behavioral concerns. African American children are disproportionately diagnosed with disabilities related to externalizing behaviors, such as aggression or hyperactivity (Bean, 2013). Skiba et al. (2008) argued African American children are disproportionately referred to special education primarily by White, middle-class teachers. Students who are placed in special education are often stigmatized and experience poorer educational outcomes (Bean, 2013) and are more likely to be incarcerated later in life (Vaughn et al., 2008).
More often than not, African American male educators are viewed as disciplinarians rather than as having an intellectual impact on kids. In many school settings, African American males are subjugated to roles such as physical education teachers or coaches who are often in charge of maintaining order and handling student behavioral issues (Bryan & Ford, 2014). Brown (2009) described many styles of teaching performance among African American educators. One of those styles includes the “enforcer.” Brown described this style of teaching as enforcing expectations of classroom behavior and executing abrupt and immediate disciplinary action if the rules are broken. In a follow-up study, Brown (2012) conducted interviews with 10 African American male teachers to further investigate their part in the education field. Brown (2012) reported African American male teachers were expected to be physically intimidating. The teachers expressed a belief that they were expected to use their physical presence to govern African American boys.

**African American Women in U.S. Public School Classrooms**

African American women make up 98% of all African American teachers, which is only 5.3% of all teachers in U.S. public school classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020). African American women have an important place in the teacher workforce. Villegas and Irvine (2010) identified two areas where African American women make an impact in the teacher workforce. First, African American women help improve the schooling experience and academic results of African American students. Second, Villegas and Irvine discovered African American women are more likely to feel called to teach in low-income schools where teacher openings are hard to fill. Although African American females provide great support and academic leadership in the classroom, the presence of an African American male educator is still invaluable. Studies have shown the effects of having an African American male teacher between
the third and fifth grade increases the probability of African American students pursuing postsecondary education and decreasing the dropout rate by 30% in African American students (Pollard, 2020). More representation of African American males in the classroom could lead to young African American men viewing the teaching profession as a career they would want to pursue.

Significance of African American Male Teachers in Urban Public Schools

The demographics of students attending public schools has consistently become more diverse. In the United States, 41% of the students who attend public schools identify as non-White (NCES, 2015). Despite constant change in student demographics, teacher demographics have not evolved to meet the diversity of the changing student population (Arends et al., 2011). White women make up 79% of teachers, White men make up 21% of public-school teachers, African Americans comprise 7% of teachers, and individuals of Latino and Asian backgrounds make up 3% of teachers (NCES, 2015). African American students comprise 33% of the student population in U.S. public schools, but African American male teachers only make up 2% of teachers (NCES, 2015). In U.S. public schools, 84% of teachers are women, with the remaining 16% being male teachers (National Center for Education Information [NCEI], 2005). According to Secretary Arne Duncan, school districts need to make a valiant effort to employ more African American men (CNN, 2010). Employing more African American male teachers can bring new ideas and new teaching strategies that can be very impactful to a school (Congressional Record, 2001,). When racial stability takes place in the education field, such a shift can increase academic achievement and create equality (Henze et al., 2002,).

African American male educators in the classroom will likely be more familiar with the cultural needs of African American students, which could facilitate greater opportunities for
academic achievement. Next, having African American male educators in public schools is important because African American students benefit from having an African American male educator. Research findings have noted lower dropout rates, fewer disciplinary issues, and better test scores when African American males are in the classroom with African American students (Underwood, 2019). Also, African American male teachers can have a positive influence on children from all backgrounds and break bad stereotypes often projected toward African Americans. When African American males serve in teaching roles, it provides an opportunity for them to have alternative to the negative and destructive African American male images so many African American children often see portrayed in the media and in some cases, in their own communities.

Motivational Factors Influencing African American Male Teachers

There are many reasons why African American male students do not consider teaching as a viable career. Given that the majority of U.S. teachers are women, teaching is viewed as a feminine profession (Rice-Booth, 2011). African American men, in general, perceive teachers as nonmasculine and prefer to engage in male-oriented activities such as sports, business, or management (Smith et al., 2004). Salary and job satisfaction may also deter students from becoming educators. In a 1988 survey conducted by Harris, the researcher purported that African American and Latino male teacher had a greater probability than White teachers to consider leaving the teaching force for financial reasons. In addition, these teachers were also less likely to encourage their children or their students to chase a career in teaching due to their own dissatisfaction with their teaching careers (Smith et al., 2004). Teaching as a career is not widely promoted among African American men. Instead, African American men are encouraged to pursue careers in professional sports and entertainment, as they are highly revered in the African
American community. For example, Johnson and Migliacco (2009) conducted a survey study that included 17 African American boys and their parents/guardians to examine the reasons why the boys participated in sports. The researchers concluded many African American parents viewed sports as an avenue out of poverty and as a pathway to better opportunities and success.

Many children feel sports are the only means to success. In addition, parents view participation in sports as providing many positive life lessons, such as enhanced physical fitness, teamwork and discipline, and the value of hard work. This way of thinking is not uncommon, given African American men seem to be surrounded by African American sports figures and entertainers on TV, or in the news. These African American celebrities serve as examples for African American children. Often, there is little knowledge of those who are outstanding in academic fields such as science, math, engineering, and technology (STEM). Although many African American male students excel in sports and entertainment, the typical African American male will never be drafted into professional sports. According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) data on African American athletes, only one in 4,000 (or 0.00025%) of high school senior boys will get drafted to the National Basketball Association (NBA); relatedly, only eight in 10,000 (or 0.0008%) of high school senior boys will get drafted by the National Football League (NFL; NCAA African American Research, 2013).

With such low statistics, these young men need to know there are other means of success outside of sports, such as education. Similar to sports, music has also been a major source of influence for African American male career choices. Music icons, especially from the hip-hop culture, are idolized by many African American men, but odds of a lucrative career in music are just as slim as the chances of becoming a professional athlete (Pillow, 2020). Still, the rags-to-riches stories and images of wealthy artists portraying a lifestyle filled with beautiful women, the
latest fashion, and exotic cars, continue to majorly attract young African American men. To exacerbate matters, many of these influences are not positive and they perpetuate stereotypes of African American male involvement in violence, promiscuity, and drug dealing.

African American Male Teacher Recruitment Programs

Programs aimed to attract African American male teachers are crucial to improving their existence in schools. African American teacher recruitment programs have gained traction over the past few years. In 2010, former U.S. Department of Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, launched the Teach Campaign. This program was created to raise awareness of careers in the teaching profession to a new wave of college students. During an interview with CNN, Duncan discussed why the United States needs a more diverse teaching force (Associated Press, 2011). One major goal was to increase awareness among the African American community in hope of recruiting more African American men into teaching. Duncan postulated students benefit when teachers of all racial backgrounds populate the U.S. classroom. Duncan (2010) also argued African American male teachers can have an extreme influence on young men who are “desperately looking for strong father figures” (p. 21).

Recruitment programs are important for several reasons. First, recruitment programs can help cover the cost of school for African American men who major in education. In addition, these programs often include a high school teacher who mentors and guides students through the process of becoming a teacher (Harper & Porter, 2012; Okezie, 2003). Mentorship is invaluable; it can help provide students with academic assistance and guidance through the teacher certification program. Mentorship can also provide students with social support and can help them manage work, school, and personal situations (Pabon et al., 2011). More recently, several cities—including New York City, New York; Charlotte, North Carolina; South Bend, Indiana;
San Francisco, California; and Shaker Heights, Ohio—have expressed a desire for more African American educators. Several of these school districts have instituted programs aimed at recruiting African American men.

**Model Recruitment Programs for African American Male Teachers**

The Call Me MISTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) program was developed by Jones (2000) at Clemson University. This program was designed to improve the number of African American men in South Carolina’s public-school districts. According to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2015), Call ME MISTER has received national recognition for addressing contemporary social justice challenges by increasing the quality of education in low-performing elementary schools. These standards are achieved by investing in male college students who desire to teach young children and help them reach their potential.

Call Me MISTER has reached national recognition through multiple forms of media, such as CNN, Facebook, and YouTube. To apply for the program, applicants must complete an essay stating why they want to become a teacher. Applicants are then interviewed by the program director. Once admitted into the program, candidates are provided tuition assistance, room and board, and a stipend for books, as well as guidance toward becoming a certified teacher. The participants must meet acceptable academic standards for the designated teacher education programs. Participants must also attend workshops, seminars, and conferences pertaining to education. Tutoring is also available to assist with preparation for the Praxis 1 and 2 teacher certification examinations. Upon completion, MISTERs are required to teach at the elementary level for every year they have received tuition assistance. Call Me MISTER has expanded to 14 universities in South Carolina and other states, including Florida, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Missouri, Georgia, and Mississippi. Since the program began, it has
graduated 150 MISTERs who have become fully certified and have secured teaching positions. Currently, there are 164 MISTERs enrolled in the 17 participating universities (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2015). The program continues to flourish and offer exceptional opportunity to those who desire a career in teaching.

**GRIOTS**

In 1998, Okezie, an education professor at Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan, started the GRIOTS program. The term *Griot* is a West African term referring to storytellers. The GRIOTS program was created to raise the number of African American male teachers working in PK–12 schools in the Detroit, Michigan area and nationwide (Okezie, 2003). Ninety percent of the students in the Detroit public education system were African American, whereas less than 10% of the teachers are African American. Therefore, the program aimed to train African American males from diverse backgrounds to become teachers. To be eligible for the program, candidates needed to have completed a bachelor’s degree and earned at least a 2.7 grade point average (GPA). They also had to engage in an interview process with the program director. Once admitted, the candidates were required to complete a five-semester, 2-year certification program. Candidates who enrolled in the program worked with a cohort group throughout the five semesters that promoted peer support and the development of relationships and professional growth. The cohorts, ranging in age from 24–65, met on the weekends, allowing the members to maintain their working status during the week. Okezie (2003) described the cohort members as career changers because they joined the cohort to enter a teaching career.

The program recruited 117 members through advertisements and word of mouth during the first 3 years of operation and 84 of these men (72%) graduated from the first and second cohorts (Okezie et al., 2002). Okezie et al. (2002) predicted graduation rates would continue to
increase, as men in the program expressed a strong desire to give back to the community.

Requirements during the program included an acceptable GPA and passage of the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC) Basic Skills Test. Participants in the program would receive a master’s degree in education and a teaching certificate. After graduating and completing the certification program, graduates were guaranteed a job and many now work in the Detroit public schools; however, Okezie (2003) noticed a trend where many graduates eventually moved into administrative positions and higher education positions. Many alumni also became mentors to the new group of GRIOTS members. Unfortunately, GRIOTs was very successful program, but lost their external funding and was discontinued.

Project TEACH

Project TEACH was developed to address issues of social justice, education equity, and diversity among teachers. This program supported minority teacher candidates through the process of applying to college and finding placement in the field (Irizarry, 2007). Project TEACH aimed to increase the number of African American and Latino teachers in the public school system. The program was established as a partnership between a large university, a local school district, and a community organization referred to as the Learning Center. The Learning Center provided GED training for students who failed to complete high school (Irizarry, 2007). Irizarry (2007), the project’s organizer, recruited African American and Latino men from the Learning Center. With training, Irizarry believed these students could be candidates for teaching given their diverse identities and experiences. “Home-growing,” an approach designed to have African American and Latino teachers work in the neighborhood in which they grew up, allowed them to relate to students from similar backgrounds (Irizarry, 2007).
The Project TEACH program was initially funded by the Learning Center and the university. After 2 years, the program received a federal grant. Students from the Learning Center were given the opportunity to attend a local, 4-year college, located in the city. Teaching candidates were supported with funds to cover the cost of tuition, books, and academic support through tutoring and mentorship. Prior to entering the program, participants had to sign a 2-year service agreement to teach in the local school district. After the students graduated and completed the teacher certification program, the local school district provided them with teaching positions. The school district served about 26,000 students. Latinos accounted for 50% of the students and African American comprised 28% of the student population. Over 50% of African American students and 75% of Latino students at these schools failed to graduate high school in 4 years, and three out of four students qualified for free-or-reduced lunch.

The program operated for 12 years, but recruitment was discontinued at Year 8. Over this 8-year period, 22 of 26 students completed their degrees and entered the teaching profession. Therefore, 81% of Project TEACH members graduated in 4 years, a higher graduation rate than the general population (Irizarry, 2007). Of the students who did not complete the program, three left to start families and one left due to financial hardship and joined the military. Of the 22 students who completed the program, 18 received jobs in the local school district, two worked in early childhood centers that were not a part of the public school system, and two received jobs as curriculum specialists and educators for local community-based organizations. Although the number of recruits was relatively low, Project TEACH members accounted for over half of all non-White students enrolled in the teacher preparation program (Irizarry, 2007).

Participants in Project TEACH identified three features of the program that encouraged them to become educators (Irizarry, 2007). First, the candidates identified the use of “home
“growing” as a prominent feature. The students valued the opportunity to work in the school district in which they grew up. Many students wanted to stay in the area and felt comfortable and knowledgeable in the school system. Students also reported the benefits of family support, such as the ability to live at home and commute. Second, the students expressed excitement about being social justice educators. The students recognized limitations of teaching from a monocultural perspective. The program offered outside trainings on social justice issues that helped participants develop the skills to work with students from diverse backgrounds. Third, participants indicated the extended support, such as funding and mentorship received, was a strong motivation to continue the program and remain in teaching careers. In 2002, the project began to lose funding. As a result, the program was discontinued. Teaching candidates who were already enrolled in the project were permitted to complete their degrees with financial support. There was no specific reason for the loss of funding, but it seemed federal monies dried up or funding was allocated to other areas. As a result of this 12-yearlong project, the local school districts’ minority teacher population was more representative of the national minority population.

Summary

History has demonstrated the struggle African American and other non-White individuals have faced in the United States. Acts of discrimination and systems of oppression have impacted the African American experience of schooling and education. In addition, African American have faced other hardships outside of the classroom, including poverty and racial discrimination, leading to a high rate of young men spending time in the prison system. When examining the opportunities available to young African American men, many look to athletics and entertainment as their tickets to success rather than a career in teaching. Given the negative
experiences and lack of African American male role models in teaching, many African American children are not inspired to pursue teaching as a lifelong career. To change this trend, African American men need to have better educational experiences and an expanded view of their career options. One way to address these barriers is to recruit more African American men into teaching careers. To recruit more African American men into teaching, one must understand what motivates those to obtain this type of profession. Therefore, it was essential that research focuses on motivational factors that influence African American males’ decisions to pursue teaching. The purpose of this research was to examine the underrepresentation of African American male teachers and their career choices and experiences, in hopes of creating more efficient recruitment programs and ultimately improving the African American male teaching force.
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the current qualitative case study was to examine the career choices and experiences of African American male teachers in secondary grade settings and discover why there remains an underrepresentation of African American males who teach core subjects in U.S. public schools. This study sought to explore what motivated African American males to select a career in education, reasons for the lack of African American males in public schools who teach core subjects, experiences causing African American males to leave the education field, and reasons African American males decide to remain in education. The demographics of public schools in the United States continue to steadily change, but the field of teachers has not kept up the pace and evolved with the changing demographics (Schaeffer, 2021). African American males are marginalized in the education field and particularly in public school classrooms.

This challenge means many secondary students are never exposed to an African American male teacher. Given negative stereotypes perpetuated by media surrounding African American males (Causey, 2021), it is important young students are exposed to positive African American males. In addition, exposure to cultural diversity and the African American male perspective will help students become well-rounded and able to navigate a world rich with diversity. As such, it was essential to investigate what factors motivated current African American male teachers to choose the education field as a career.

I focused my attention on the underrepresentation of African American male educators in public schools. The reason I chose to focus my efforts here was because a majority of African American students attend public schools in the United States (Boschma & Brownstein, 2016). I excluded charter schools from my study because they often operate independently from public schools and tailor their classrooms to meet the specific needs of their students. Charter schools
are tuition-free schools that are publicly founded but independently operated (Prothero, 2018). Charter schools were created in 1992 (Eckes, 2019) in the state of Minnesota to help loosen some of the restrictions of which public schools must contend (Prothero, 2018). Often, when charter schools open, they syphon funding away from the local public schools, which can cause a loss in resources (ed.gov, 2021). The Fordham Institute conducted a study and postulated that African American students are more likely to have a teacher of the same race in a charter school than a traditional public school (Mahken, 2019). The findings showed public schools and charter schools serve the same proportions of African American students, but charter schools have about 35% more African American teachers. African American pupils in charter schools have a 50% greater chance of having an African American male teacher than their counterparts, whereas White students are equally likely to have at least a White teacher at both type of schools.

Moreover, charter schools can screen the type of students allowed to attend their school. As a public-school graduate who encountered one African American male teacher in my secondary education experience, I focused on ways to improve diversity in these settings, because most African American pupils go to public schools.

As of May 2020, 50.7 million students are enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020). Out of that 50.7 million, 7.7 million of those students are African American, comprising 15% of public-school students. The number of African American students at private schools is 9.3% (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Because more African American students attend public schools, and African American males make up 2% of the teaching force, such metrics are indicative of an alarming issue.

During this study, I came to a few realizations. First, I gained an understanding of the motivational factors that guide African American males who choose a career in education. I also
observed how African American males viewed the need for more diversity in secondary grade settings. Secondly, I furthered understanding of why the presence of African American males teaching core subjects is low in the education field. The information gained from this study can be used by school district, university, and state education agency stakeholders to create ways to attract African American males into the teacher workforce. Often, African American males do not teach core subjects—rather, they teach physical education and health or serve in administrative roles or as dean of discipline in public schools (Beall, 2020). This is the reason I focused my study on African American males who teach core subjects. Lastly, I gained insight into the experiences of African American male educators who have stayed in the teaching profession 2 or more years. Focusing on teachers who have remained in the profession for multiple years yielded great insight into how school personnel can retain current teachers and what can be done to improve the education field for future teachers.

**Research Design**

A qualitative intrinsic case study (Yin, 2013) was used with the intention of highlighting the understanding of the career choices and experiences of African American males in secondary settings. This study highlighted their experiences as secondary level teachers, explored what attracted them to the teaching profession, and identified aspects that deter other African American males from the education field. In this chapter, I present the research method, the study’s recruitment process, participants, the data collection process used, and how the data collected were secured and analyzed.

To achieve the best understanding of the career choices and experiences of African American men, I determined case study design (Yin, 2013) would provide critical detail and create a clear picture of what the African American male experience as educators. A case study
(Yin, 2013) offers the opportunity to study a specific population to gain in-depth information about their lives. This research design allowed me to sufficiently investigate African American male teachers’ career choices and experiences in secondary settings. An abundance of data were accessible in examining recruitment and retention patterns of African American male teachers in the United States, but existing data did not offer an exclusive description of the issues African American male teachers face (Chang, 2011; Howard et al., 2012; Kenyatta, 2012; Matthew-Whetstone & Scott, 2015; Rauschenberg, 2014).

To conduct this study, I formulated an email that I sent out to all school district leaders in South Louisiana asking for participants for my study (see Appendix A). In my email, I provided background information about the study, the process of how the study would be conducted, the link to answer the survey questions, and all my contact information. The school district leaders forwarded the email to principals of the middle and high schools, where the principals signed the administrator consent form (see Appendix B), giving me permission to recruit participants. Potential participants indicated their interest in participating in the study by completing a Qualtrics form (see Appendix C) to get their basic demographic information and verify that they met the subject inclusion criteria. Another avenue I took to recruit participants for this study was to post on social media for potential participants to fill out the Qualtrics form. Subjects in this study had to (a) identify as African American, and (b) not have less than 2 years teaching experience. Participants excluded from the study were those who did not identify as African American male, had fewer than 2 years of teaching experience, and or did not teach a core subject.

Participants had to sign a consent form (see Appendix D) before participating in interviews and received a $20 gift card for participating. Each participant took part in a 40–80
minute interview using a semistructured interview protocol (see Appendix E). The interviews took place based on participants’ availability. Interviews either took place in a private office, conference rooms at Louisiana State University, or a location of the participant’s choice. Each interview was audio-recorded for transcription purposes. If the interview could not take place in person, participants could participate in a web-based interview (e.g., Zoom). In addition to recruiting participants directly from the Qualtrics form, I used snowball-sampling techniques. This technique allowed me to ask participants if they could recommend a peer who may have qualified to participate for study.

Hard copies of signed consent forms were placed in a locked file box in my office. Any consent forms sent via email from subjects who participated virtually (e.g., phone, Zoom) were immediately printed and placed in a locked file box in my office. Interview audio files, transcripts, participant pseudonyms and demographic information, and subsequent data analysis were only shared between myself and my advisor in a password-protected Dropbox folder. A file with participants’ names and the new identifier (i.e., the pseudonym associated with them) was stored separately from all data on my password-protected computer.

Participants

As the researcher, I used purposeful sampling to select participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is used to “discover, understand, or gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). The objective of my sampling approach was to provide different viewpoint of African American men’s career choices and experiences in secondary settings (Merriam, 2009). The 17 participants were selected from different secondary schools in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, metropolitan area. Participants for the study had to be an African American male, not have less than 2 years teaching experience,
and had to teach a core subject at the secondary level. According to Collins et al. (2007), a multitude of purposive sampling schemes can be used for research studies. For this study, in-depth interviews were utilized to assemble information from participants. Patton (2002), a notable researcher for purposive sampling, stated purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. The research participants were African American males who taught different core subjects at different grade levels. This study examined African American males’ experiences as educators (see Appendix F).

Numerous precautions were taken to make sure the identities of this study’s participants remained confidential. In the study, participants’ real names were not used. Participants went by the pseudonym they selected from a list of generated names. Also, the participants’ schools were not identified in the study and went by the name School 1, School 2, etc. Any documentation that could be used to identify participants were stored on a flash drive and placed in a locked safe. To access these files, a secure password was required. I transcribed and analyzed all recorded interviews. The participants were chosen based on voluntary consent and provided the opportunity to leave the study at any time. This study was designed very carefully to ensure no physical nor psychological harm was done to participants. Once I secured participants, they were provided a copy of the interview protocol, consent form, time requirements, and my personal contact information. Finally, I provided information on the risks and benefits corresponding with participation in this study.

**Setting**

All participants worked at schools in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, metropolitan area. Baton Rouge, Louisiana is the state capital of Louisiana and borders the Mississippi River.
Currently, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is the seat to two universities: (a) Louisiana State University, which was founded in 1860; and (b) Southern University, which was founded in 1880. Both universities contribute to the economic and education of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and the entire state. In 2020, Baton Rouge, Louisiana had a population of 220,236 and was the second largest city in Louisiana after New Orleans and the 105th largest city in the United States. According to the 2020 U.S. census, Baton Rouge, Louisiana is 54.97% African American, 38.73% White, 3.22% Asian, 1.40% two or more races, 1.39% other race, 0.25% Native American, and 0.04% Pacific Islander. The main school district in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is the East Baton Rouge Parish (EBR) school district. The EBR school district is the second largest public school system in the state, serving more than 41,000 students. There are 17 high schools housed in the EBR parish school district. The demographics of EBR school district are: 47.4% African American, 43.1% White, 4.0% Latino, 3.7% Asian, 1.4% Mixed, and 0.4% Other (Statistical Atlas, 2020). The average teacher salary in the state of Louisiana is $50,000 (iTeach LA, 2021) less than the U.S. average at $62,870 (NCES, 2020). The average starting salary for teachers in the Baton Rouge metropolitan area is $45,000 (iTeach LA, 2021).

Data Collection

The main source of data collection used was done through in-depth interviews with African American male teachers. I made arrangements to visit the different schools and address all potential participants interested in being a part of this study. Additionally, I contacted all interested participants by email and phone. The interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder or a cell phone app called the Otter app. The participants in the study were provided opportunities to review all audio, written, and transcribed data from the interviews to make sure proper interpretation of data collected was correct.
Data Analysis

The research approach used to collect data was done through in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted at the schools of the African American male teachers or via zoom. All participants identities were kept anonymous. The benefit of employing the case study research approach was it provided an opportunity to gain specific information on the experiences of African American male teachers. Finally, case study research presented flexibility that provided me the opportunity to gain multiple understandings of the data.

I looked to explore what influenced African American male to choose education as a career. I sought to identify the hurdles encountered on their journeys to become teachers and issues they have faced as a teacher. In qualitative case study research, data analysis involves carefully going over written notes and transcribing audio recordings from the interviews to create a product that can be easily interpreted by the investigator and readers.

The data went under an analysis using an inductive approach. Creswell (2009) said this approach “involves researchers working back and forth between the themes and database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes” (p. 39). The audio recordings, notes, and transcribed data went under analysis until enough themes had been identified and expressed in this study (see Appendix G).

Human Participants Ethical Precaution

In this study, I followed the Louisiana State University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards (see Appendix H) by securing the written consent of all participants. The consent form was as an agreement between myself and the subjects who agreed to take part in the study. Before the start of the interviews, I reviewed the consent form with the participants and answered any questions they had. Each participant gave written permission for
allow me to record the interviews. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim into printed form. If a participant agreed to participate but did not want to be audio taped, I accepted their request and took detailed notes in the interview. Participants were able to review all audio recordings and notes to check for accuracy. When the one-on-one interviews were completed, I emailed each participant individually, thanking them for their participation and providing them with a $20 gift card.

**Credibility and Dependability**

The study may be susceptible to researcher bias, because I am an African American male educator who teaches a core subject. At the time of this study, I was employed at a large private high school but spent the previous 4 years teaching in a public school. I relied only on the information provided by the participants and did not take any further measures to interfere with data provided by the participants.

**Subjectivity and Positionality Statement**

As I began this research project for my dissertation, I wanted to select a topic I was interested in, and one that would be meaningful to pursue. As an African American male teacher, I have often been the only minority or one of few who teach a core subject. When I look in different classrooms, I increasingly see diverse students, but less diversity when it comes to the teachers in the front of the classrooms. It is important to understand why classroom demographics are structured in this manner, because minority students need teachers who look like them and can understand their backgrounds. At the time of this study, I taught ninth graders in the subject of biology, coached the varsity running backs on the football team, and was in Year 7 of my career. I was not employed in the same school system as where study took place.
As an African American male educator with 7 years of experience, I have noticed the lack of African American males in the education field. Throughout the course of my academic journey, I encountered one African American male teacher from kindergarten to my ongoing role as a teacher. My initial plan upon entering college was to become a dentist and have my own private practice. Once I graduated college, I decided to pursue my master’s degree in biology to improve my chances of being accepted into dental school. While pursuing my Masters, I volunteered as a substitute teacher at some of the local high schools. I noticed very few African American men worked in the schools, leaving many African American male students without a male role model teaching in the classroom beyond coaches who taught physical education. This experience changed my entire outlook on what direction I wanted to go with my life.

The opportunity to become an educator has provided me with the fulfilment, knowing I have had an impact on students from all walks of life. Although very few members of family were educators other than myself and my grandmother, I decided to pursue education because I want to use education as a pedestal to reach youth and guide them in the right direction. I believe my success as an educator can inspire young African American students to pursue a career as an educator. It is very important for young African American males to have access to role models they can learn from through continued conversations and interactions. Having successful African American male teachers can help elevate the profession, which is one of my personal goals as an educator. Often, when African American students are taught by teachers from a different race, those teachers may have low expectations of the African American student. In situations where African American students were taught by African American male teachers, the teachers held the students to a higher standard (Gershenson, 2015). Chang (2011) believed teacher motivation influences motivation and student performance. From my own experience, when I had an
African American male teacher, I felt he wanted me to succeed and considered me more than just a warm body in a desk in the classroom. The opportunity to examine the underrepresentation of African American male teachers and their career choices and experiences in secondary education was, therefore, a worthy topic of research.
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

Chapter 4 begins with a summary of the study, followed by an introduction of participants, presentation of findings, interview results, themes, a summary of the findings, and limitations. The purpose of this case study was to examine the career choices and experiences of African American male teachers in secondary grade settings. This study sought to discover what initially attracts African American males to the education field, what keeps them in the education field, and how to recruit more African American males to become teachers. By capturing African American male teachers’ exclusive experiences about the different avenues that caused them to become secondary level education teachers, I identified ways that can help create new programs to recruit more African American males to the education field. Conducting a qualitative study using a case study approach was appropriate for this study because it provided flexibility, data-rich experiences, and a descriptiveness distinctly found in human experience, which was warranted to sufficiently explore this topic. The teachers themselves provided critical insights into their experiences before and during their careers, as only those who can experience the aspect of being an African American male teacher.

Selecting a study sample is a major part of conducting a research project, because it is seldom possible to study an entire group. Literature supported by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2012) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggested sample size and sampling are not issues in qualitative research and sampling does not explain what is undertaken in qualitative studies. Because qualitative researchers are not typically concerned in generalizing to underlying groups, it is not uncommon for qualitative researchers to decide that sampling is not a problem (Marshall & Rossman). In this study, the researcher used data saturation. Data saturation occurs when a researcher comes to a point in the research process where new information is not discovered in
data analysis, and such redundancy signals to the researcher that data collection may cease (Faulkner & Trotter).

Three questions helped determine appropriate study methodology:

Research Question 1: What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to enter and stay in the teaching profession?

Research Question 2: What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to disaffiliate from the teaching profession?

Research Question 3: What do African American male teachers believe about why there is an underrepresentation of African American males in the teaching profession?

**Participant Profiles**

The participants in this study have very diverse backgrounds from their age, the universities they attended, subjects they teach, and the years of teaching experience they have. All participants were born in the United States, identified as African American males, and taught a core subject in a secondary public-school setting. All participants were 18 and older, and their teaching experience ranged from 2–46 years. When it came to subjects taught by participants, seven of the participants taught social studies, four participants taught science, four participants taught English, and only two participants taught math. Out of all participants, only one indicated they were currently teaching at the middle school level. Ten out of the 17 participants indicated they held a master’s degree or some type of advanced degree beyond a bachelor’s degree. Twelve of the 17 participants indicated they received their teaching certification through an alternative teaching certification program.

Participants selected pseudonyms from a random boy name generator during their individual interviews that are included in Table 1, along with the grade levels they taught, years
of teaching experience, and content areas. Participant profiles were created to add further context to the experiences of each participant. Each profile includes background information, comments, and statements used by each participant.

Table 1. Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Core subject</th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>HBCU or PWI</th>
<th>First-generation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avery</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Football, Track &amp; Field</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Football, Track &amp; Field</td>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camron</td>
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<td>Social studies</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher</td>
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<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavyn</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hezekiah</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayce</td>
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<td>Social studies/English</td>
<td></td>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis</td>
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<td>Social studies</td>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddox</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
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<td>English</td>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>Football, Basketball</td>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>HBCU</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrance</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Avery**

Avery was a high school science teacher who taught chemistry, physics, and environmental science and had 5 years of teaching experience. Avery earned a Bachelor of Science from Southern University, and his master’s degree from Grand Canyon University. He
received his teaching license through an alternative teaching program. Avery was a first-generation college student and the first person in his family to earn a college degree. During the interview, Avery mentioned he had teaching experience on both the middle and high school levels. He stated African American males do not want to deal with African American teen males, which is why there is a lack of African American male teachers. He suggested school districts partner with local colleges (e.g., HBCUs) to create dual enrollment programs that lead more African American males to an education degree in teaching.

**Benjamin**

Benjamin was a high school math teacher who taught geometry and algebra and had 9 years of teaching experience. He earned a bachelor of science from Mississippi State University and was pursuing his master’s degree in educational leadership at the time of this study. He received his teaching license through an alternative teaching certification program. During Benjamin’s individual interview, he indicated job satisfaction is 80% of the reason African American males leave or remain in the profession. Benjamin also indicated the difficulty of passing praxis exams and low pay are other factors that lead to a lack of African American male teachers. He mentioned African American male teachers have a tremendous impact on students from all backgrounds; they break stereotypes, serve as father figures, and show the youth different avenues for success. Lastly, Benjamin believed to get more African American male teachers, they must be recruited early and made to feel valuable.

**Bobby**

Bobby was a high school social studies teacher and also a dean of students. He had 18 years of teaching experience and received his bachelor of science degree in history from Southern University. He credited his mother, who was a teacher, and his father, who was an
attorney, as his biggest influence to enter the teaching profession. During the interview Bobby stated being underpaid, overworked, handling a lack of discipline from students, and navigating several different curricula are reasons for the underrepresentation of African American male teachers. However, Bobby believed African American male teachers wield a large influence on all kids, they are father figures, and they are in position to save lives. Lastly, Bobby stated teachers must have a passion and a calling to succeed in the role.

Camron

Camron was a high school social studies teacher who taught U.S. history and world history and had 46 years of teaching experience. He was also the social studies department chair at his school. Camron earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Southern University in 1973 and 1975, respectively. He indicated during his interview he wants to stay in the classroom because he wants to (a) be hands on with African American students, (b) provide guidance for African American kids, and (c) continue to be a role model for African American kids. He stated he always had a personal desire to become a teacher and his mother was also very influential in him becoming a teacher. Camron felt to attract more African American males, state and school district personnel can eliminate the praxis test, offer better base salary, and give African American males major roles in the school. Lastly, he believed education is very important and continues to teach to role model for African American students and the younger teachers.

Carlos

Carlos was a middle school science teacher with 2 years of teaching experience. He received his bachelor’s degree in biology from Southern University. While attending Southern University, Carlos was a first-generation college student. He received his teaching license through an alternative teaching program. Carlos’s future includes remaining in the classroom
because he felt that setting is where he can make the biggest impact on kids. During the interview, Carlos mentioned African American male teachers make a huge impact on the student body in a public school and they bring respectability to the profession. He also mentioned in the interview to attract more African American male teachers, the teaching profession has to be exposed to African American male teachers, it has to be exposed to African American males, workshops provided, support, and a worthy level of compensation to be able to take care of a family.

**Cullen**

Cullen is a high school social studies teacher who taught world history, African American studies, and fine art. He had 8 years of teaching experience. Cullen earned his bachelor of science degree in history from the University of Louisiana, Lafayette in 2009. Cullen was a first-generation college student and the first person in his family to receive a college degree. He received his teaching license through an alternative teaching program. During the interview Cullen mentioned to attract more African American male teachers, schools need to offer a good base salary with incentives. He also mentioned with low pay; lack of support from the administration and central office; other, more lucrative careers; and having families to provide for are major reasons why African American males do not enter the teaching profession. However, Cullen believed African American male teachers make a huge impact on all kids and provide a breath of fresh air in a school.

**Eugene**

Eugene was a high school English teacher with 16 years of teaching experience. He received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Southern University. Eugene also worked as a part-time English college professor. He expressed interest in leaving the classroom to move to
the district level to help with curriculum. During the interview, Eugene stated his 85-year-old great aunt and two former English teachers inspired him to become a teacher. Eugene believed a lack of interest, lack of respect for the profession, and societal perceptions of teachers’ challenges are reasons for a lack of African American male teachers. Eugene mentioned to recruit and retain African American male teachers, school leaders must pay more and provide a supportive work environment for them.

Fisher

Fisher was a high school science teacher who taught chemistry and physics and had 14 years of teaching experience. He earned his bachelor of science degree in chemistry from Xavier University in New Orleans. He later earned a Juris Doctorate in law from the Southern University Law Center. Fisher received his teaching license through an alternative teaching program. During Fisher’s interview he mentioned his 10th-grade Biology teacher, who was an African American female, inspired him to become a teacher. He also mentioned he worked at an abandoned children’s home and that experience also inspired his passion to educate children.

Fisher believed seeing more African American males teaching core subjects could inspire younger African American males to want to emulate the role models they have in front of them. He believed to recruit and retain African American male teachers, they must be placed in classes they feel comfortable teaching, have training and workshops for 1st-year teachers, and provide programs that help with retention.

Gavyn

Gavyn was a high school history and economics teacher at a rural but multicultural school. He had 9 years of teaching experience. Gavyn earned his bachelor of science degree in kinesiology from Grambling State University in 2006. He later earned his master’s degree in
Gavyn was a first-generation college student. During his PK–12 education, Gavyn had three African American male teachers. Gavyn believed if African American male students have a negative experience in school, it will deter them from pursuing a career as a teacher. He planned to stay in the classroom because he said it keeps him connected to kids and he can provide direction. He believed the lack of African American male teachers stemmed from difficulties passing the praxis exam and generally preferring to coach rather than teach.

**Hezekiah**

Hezekiah was a high school English teacher who had 2 years of teaching experience. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in English from Southern University. Hezekiah earned his teaching certification through an alternative teaching certification program. During Hezekiah’s PK–12 education experience, he had seven African American male teachers. He believed to retain African American males in the profession, they need support from the administration and faculty and should be given more responsibility beyond serving as disciplinarian. Hezekiah also mentioned low pay and the difficulty passing the praxis exam as major reasons for a lack of African American male teachers. He did think African American male teachers are role models who provide guidance, stability, and a listening ear for all children in a public school setting.

**Jaycee**

Jaycee was a high school social studies teacher with 5 years of teaching experience. He also had teaching experience at the middle school level, where he taught English and social studies. Jaycee earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Harding University. He received
his teaching license through an alternative teaching program. Jaycee was pursuing his principal certification at the time of this study. During Jaycee’s interview, he stated he wants to remain in the classroom to build relationships with the kids. He also stated a low salary, being placed in a position were doing your job successful is difficult and being forced to serve as disciplinarian are reasons African American males do not often enter the profession. He believed African American males have a huge impact in schools because they break stereotypes, serve as role models, and bring inspiration from their personal experiences. Lastly, Jaycee felt to attract more African American males, school districts should offer a higher base salary, market the field more to African American males, support African American males in the classroom, and provide opportunities to grow within the field of education.

**Lewis**

Lewis was a high school social studies teacher that is in his 5th year of teaching. He received his bachelor of science degree in political science from Florida A&M University in 2016. He became a certified teacher through an alternative teaching certification program. During Lewis’s PK–12 educational experience, he had three African American male teachers. Lewis’s plans included staying in the education field in the classroom; yet, he aspired to move into administration. He credited low pay and the process and time to get certified as reasons why African American male teachers are underrepresented in public schools.

**Maddox**

Maddox was a high school English teacher with 6 years of teaching experience. He also had 4 years of teaching experience at the college level. Maddox earned his bachelor of science degree in agriculture journalism and leadership from Texas A&M University. He later earned his master’s degree in counseling from Prairie View A&M University. Maddox was pursuing his
principal certification at the time of this study. During Maddox’s interview, he mentioned he did not have any African American male teachers in his PK–12 education experience. He described plans to leave the classroom and become a coaching and instructional leader for a school district. Additionally, he stated low pay and the stigma of teaching as a feminine profession were reasons for the underrepresentation of African American male teachers. Maddox believed school district personnel can recruit more African American males and retain current ones if they can show demonstrated success of African American male teachers.

**Manuel**

Manuel was a high school English teacher with 29 years of teaching experience. He earned his Bachelor of Science from Philander Smith College in 1990 and his master’s from Andrews University in 1992. During Manuel’s interview, he stated he is referred to as the “Black Boy Whisperer” on his campus. Because Manuel is an African American male, he felt he has been forced to be a disciplinarian. He also mentioned a lack of respect for the profession, low pay, and bad experiences in school lead to a lack of African American male teachers. Manuel stated to attract more African American males, school officials can partner potential African American male teachers with current African American male teachers for student teaching. He also believed school district personnel can attend job fairs at HBCUs and recruit from local Black fraternities.

**Samuel**

Samuel was a high school social studies teacher who taught world history and has 10 years of teaching experience. He earned his bachelor of science degree in history from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He received his teaching license through an alternative teaching certification program. During Samuel’s interview, he indicated he did not
have one African American male teacher in his PK–12 education experience. He also stated when it comes to job satisfaction, one of the major factors include micromanagement from administration. Samuel felt better paying jobs, different interests other than education, more hands-on jobs, and negative personal school experiences were key reasons for a lack of African American male teachers. Lastly, Samuel believed to recruit and retain more African American male teachers, opportunities must provide advancement, incentives, and more people in roles of leadership.

Steven

Steven was a high school science teacher who taught biology and environmental science with 16 years of teaching experience. He earned his bachelor of science in biology from Southern University in 2006. He then earned his master’s degree in sports administration from Arkansas State University in 2015 and was in the process of earning his principal certification from Lamar University. Steven received his teaching license from an alternative teaching program. During the interview, Steven mentioned he could see himself teaching forever, but did not aspire to move into administration. He also stated he has encouraged several of his former students to enter the teaching profession. He believed one main reason for the lack of African American male teachers involves third-party horror stories about teaching. Lastly, Steven stated to recruit and retain African American males, school district personnel must show support for African American males, foster growth of African American males in the profession, and provide opportunities without biases.

Terrance

Terrance was a high school math teacher who taught algebra I, algebra II, and geometry and had 5 years of teaching experience. He earned his Bachelor of Science from Truman State
University. Terrance got his teaching license through an alternative teaching certification program. During Terrance’s interview, he expressed some dissatisfaction with his job because of the way certain operations were set up. He also mentioned he planned to leave the teaching field altogether. Terrance’s main reasons for the lack of African American male teachers included low pay, lack of patience to deal with students, and the forced role of disciplinarian. Lastly, Terrance mentioned for school district personnel to recruit and retain African American males, they must stop thinking of African American males as disciplinarians, support them as teachers, and compensate them better.

**Themes**

Each participant in this study finished a semistructured interview. The interviews ranged from 20–60 minutes with an approximate average of 27 minutes. I transcribed and coded each interview. The codes were then sorted into parent codes and child codes, which led to emergent ideas. The code frequency can be found in (Appendix I). The top five codes discovered were great quotes, finances/pay scale, reasons for underrepresentation of African American male teachers, challenges to recruitment and retention, and the impact of African American male teachers. The emerging ideas were subsequently analyzed and consolidated into themes and systematically narrowed down until the following five themes were identified:

1. The impact of a former teacher and the desire to be a role model contributed to African American males’ decisions to enter the teaching profession.

2. Low salary, alternative career options, and perceptions of a teaching career are reasons African American males do not choose to enter the teaching profession.

3. The praxis test and the certification process are hurdles for African American male teachers entering into the teaching profession.
4. African American male teachers attributed being forced into disciplinarian roles and having a lack of administrative support as reasons African American male teachers are leaving the profession.

5. African American male teachers felt they and their school districts play a role in retention and recruitment.

The five themes are organized in order related to the research questions of this study. Theme 1, which highlights the impact of a former teacher and the desire to be a role model contributed to African American males’ decision to enter the teaching profession addresses Research Question 1 that focuses on why African American males enter and stay in the teaching profession. Theme 2 identifies low salary, alternative career options, and perceptions of a teaching career as reasons African American males do not enter the teaching profession. Theme 2 addresses Research Question 2, which focused on what makes African American male teachers leave the education field. Theme 3 identifies the praxis exams and certification process as hurdles for African American males becoming teachers. Theme 3 is tied to Research Question 3, which ask African American male teachers what they believe about why there is an underrepresentation of African American males in the teaching profession. Theme 4 highlights African American male teachers attributing being forced into disciplinarian roles and having a lack of support from administration as reasons African American males leave the profession. Theme 4 addresses Research Question 2. The fifth and final theme identifies African American male teachers and school districts’ personnel role in recruitment and retention. Theme 5 addresses Research Questions 1 and 3. With each theme, there are direct quotes from participants that provide support for each finding.
Theme 1: The Impact of a Former Teacher and the Desire to be a Role Model Contributed to African American Males’ Decisions to Enter the Teaching Profession

The first theme that emerged from the interviews was African American male teachers entered the profession to be role models. This aspiration was heavily influenced by the impact of a family member or former teacher and their beliefs to make an impact as African American male teachers. This theme included the following subthemes: (a) role model and father figure, (b) inspiration to become an educator, and (c) impact of African American male teachers.

Role Model and Father Figure. When interviewed about why they entered the teaching profession, the majority of participants stated they wanted to be a role model or father figure to their students. Participants in this study believed they play an important role in the development of students from all backgrounds. Several participants indicated they entered the teaching profession because they wanted to become a father figure to students who come from broken homes where no father is present. Participants also indicated they entered the teaching profession because of the relationships built with students and the joy they receive from assisting them in becoming successful, functioning adults.

One main reason that participants in this study referenced wanting to become a teacher was because of the lack of African American male role models present in public schools. Camron stated, “We need more African American male role models. Who’s going to be their immediate father figure.” Avery added:

Some may have broken homes where there is no father, there is no uncle, there is no big brother. I’ve had instances before where students will stay after class to just tell me an achievement that they’ve accomplished, you know, because they have no one at home to talk to.
Maddox gave a similar response, noting, “There’s a lot of impacts they have, especially those that might come from a single-parent home, that African American male role model, mentor is invaluable.” Fisher went into more detail on what being a role model to his students meant:

Well, African American male teachers have a great impact because, you know, they’re right there with the students interacting with them every day. They’re helping mold the students, and the students see those things and they want to emulate that. Because at the end of the day a teacher is a role model. You want to be, you know, the students are very perceptive. They can pick up; they know the positive role models.

Jayce expressed thoughts on being a role model or father figure to his students:

You have, I think, in secondary public schools that is, African American males have a huge impact. Most of my students last year, they were like my little brothers, or my sons, or my daughters. We were all like a big family, and it comes from, you know, just being who you are. It just depends on who you are as a person. But for me, I value relationships, and that’s one of the things that I worked on with my students from Day 1. And just allowing them to, you know, having your students and being able to have those real-life conversations with them. Being able to tell them, you know, assist them with job applications, and resumes, and the importance of making sure of your financial status, you’re stable, you’re getting a job and taking care of yourself. It just depends on who you are as a person and how much you’re willing to do to make sure that all your kids succeed. But I would say that I think in the building, we have some of the biggest, if not the biggest, we have the biggest chance for moving students and growing students. Because once you build that relationship, and especially for African American students, they don’t really have big brothers or fathers who look like you, who look like them, and who is trying to assist them with being better. So, when they get someone like you and you’re helping them be better, become better, it makes them want to become better for themselves. So, I think that we have a huge impact. It just depends on how much work we’re willing to put in with our students.

Lastly, Gavin stated:

If you have a Black male in your classroom, it’s like having a father in your classroom, having a Black father in your classroom. You know, anybody who has grown up with a father either has a strong male influence, just having their presence there is major, and that goes a long way. Structure, organization, discipline, vision. All in one.

**Inspiration to Become an Educator.** Connected to the overall theme of why African American males enter the teaching profession, the subtheme of inspiration to become an educator was something several participants mentioned; namely, a family member, former teacher, or
experience had an impact in them choosing to become teachers. Several participants in this study indicated a big reason they became a teacher was because they had an immediate family member who was an educator. A few participants mentioned a teacher they had in their PK–12 educational journey played a significant role in them choosing to become a teacher. One participant also indicated an experience he had working with underprivileged children sparked his interest to become a teacher.

Bobby mentioned his mother was an educator and his father was an attorney, and they both stressed the importance of getting an education. This influence led Bobby to pursue the teaching profession because he believed it would be a rewarding career where he would impact a lot of lives of children. Benjamin stated:

My family, I really noticed the impact they have on people’s lives. You know, I have friends that’s doctors and lawyers and all kinds of, you know, much financially stronger jobs. But none of them seem to have the impact on people that this job has, and it’s one of the things that keeps me in the profession, because you have a long-lasting impact on children, and if I can convince two of them to be better people than what they would have been.

Steven also expressed a family member played a role in him choosing to enter the teaching profession. Specifically, Steven mentioned his mother, who was an educator for 21 years and who taught different science courses in high school. She inspired him to follow her footsteps and become a high school science teacher. Culled added:

I had a biology teacher in high school. Miss Sanders, a Black lady. And she was more than a teacher. She was like everyone. She was a parent, an aunt, an uncle, a friend. And she made biology fun and interesting. But she also taught us life skills, too, and I kind of fell into education to be perfectly honest, but I do believe that it was all part of the divine plan. But her and my other high school teachers that looked like me inspired me to, in short, inspired me to be an educator.

Many participants shared similar thoughts of who inspired them to pursue a career in education. One participant, Lewis, mentioned one of his former teachers as his biggest inspiration. He said:
I did have one teacher that, well it’s actually two of them, that I know kind of played a huge role, and they’re not males, but they both surrounded themselves with some very good educator mentors that also got them to that place. My first one was my kindergarten teacher, Miss Giles. She taught me the art of handwriting and how that plays a huge part in knowing about a student and about how you learn is how you write, because that’s literally the groundwork of kindergarten: how to write.

Samuel expressed his U.S. history and advanced placement (AP) history teacher in high school inspired him to enter the teaching profession, recalling: “

It was my U.S. history and AP history teacher in high school. I’ve always had a love for history, and so that was kind of like, I don’t know what, something just clicked one day, and I was like, “You know what, I could do this.” Watching the way he taught the class, and how he did things, carried himself, always respectful, never looked down at people, didn’t care if you were White, Black, yellow, green. He looked at everybody as we were all equals.

Fisher said his 10th-grade biology teacher, along with an experience he had working at a children’s home for abused and neglected children, inspired him to enter the profession. Fisher stated:

Actually, you know, I guess my path to education is different. I guess it did have different factors. I would say, one, my 10th-grade biology one who was also my 12th-grade biology teacher. In my opinion, this woman was probably the smartest person on Earth to me, and it was just the wealth of knowledge that she had, and the way that, you know, the rapport that she had with the students and the way that, you know, we could receive information from her, things like that. Also, you know, she played a big impact on me going into education. But oddly, also, when I was in my senior year of college, I had, like I said, I was just a straight science major. I had planned on going actually to Tulane to study environmental toxicology. Had already been admitted. I started working at a children’s home for abandoned, abused, and neglected children my senior year of college. And, you know, in that time that I was working there in that year, I realized the positive impacts that we had on the kids. Because most of the workers were college students. So, we did have positive impacts on the students, I mean, the residents, and we saw how that was impacting their lives.

Camron was another participant who had multiple reasons for entering the teaching profession. Camron said he always wanted to enter the teaching profession, as his mother, a former teacher, inspired him. Camron stated:
My desire to be a teacher from elementary school was always so strong I never even considered any other field, although later on in life, later on in high school, and especially my early years of college, others tried to influence me to change. I was always that people person, and I always felt like I could help somebody else. I always felt like I’d be a good person to help somebody else to learn, and it’s just always been a self-satisfying desire to teach. So, if I could say one person, I can’t. I can’t really say one person. My mom eventually became a teacher, but after working as a cook at the school I attended for 15 years and during the summer she would work for these people who’d come and pick her up and she’d ride in the back with their child and they’d call her by her first name, said that child “miss.” So, one day she had gone to work, and the lady would not allow her to use the waxing mop to wax the floors. She told her to get on my knees. My mom weighed about 250, well 300 pounds, plus, and my mom walked home that day and she cried. And I asked her why was she crying? I was like in the sixth grade. She told me what happened. That day, she decided to go and get her GED at night school. She went to college so she had five boys she had to raise, and my dad, of course, and try to go to school, which she did. And eventually, she was probably one of the oldest college students. So that when I saw that she made it, going to school some days, having to stay at Southern University all day, with a nickel. All she could buy was a bag of potato chips for a nickel. Because we were very, very poor, but she would stay all day, because they had the outlying parishes that sponsored a bus for African Americans to pick them up and take them to Southern University, and they would leave, pick them up at like 7 in the morning and stay there until 5 in the afternoon until all the kids finished taking their classes, and they would bring them back. So, after seeing her do this, that was an inspiration even more so.

**Impact of African American Male Teachers.** Within the first theme of what contributed to African American males entering the teaching profession, the subtheme impact of African American male teachers emerged. All participants interviewed at some point mentioned they believe they make an impact on all students they encounter, which is a reason they wanted to become teachers. A few impact many participants mentioned entailed students responding to someone who looked like them, breaking stereotypes, providing support and discipline, and being a positive influence. Eugene stated:

> Many of the inner-city schools for sure are basically minority and African American students. So, I believe it is a good fit when those students see people that look like them teaching them and who can perhaps relate to them better.

Eugene also noted:
I believe they have a great impact because I have had countless students return to me and let me know that I played a pivotal role in their lives, and where they ended up and their jobs and careers, even their families, you know, how they deal with things, because they remember what I [unintelligible]. I’ve seen many of my African American coworkers have students who come back and attribute their success to them. So, I believe they play a very significant role.

Samuel shared similar sentiments, noting:

I’m a firm believer that kids respond to people who look like them. I’m the only Black male in my department, but my whole department, we get along very well, and we’re pretty openminded, I will say as a group. And then being the only one who teaches this international baccalaureate (IB) course for the juniors, you know, more kids might be accepted to take an AP class if somebody who looks like them is teaching the course. But, and it’s hard to try to find those people to do it or offer those classes. So, and then you think about, okay, if this one look like me, they have more of an understanding and connection. They could be more willing to understand the material or what’s going on, you know.

Lewis further added:

It’s coming to a point where there are a lot of school districts, including the ones in Louisiana, in this state that are majority African American, and then, well a lot of folks don’t look at the numbers of African American males, and that number is very high, and when you put that ratio to African American teachers with African American students, that ratio is not looking so good, because I think most students, and this is just things that I’ve grown to understand in my experiences that students feel more comfortable with people that they know that they can relate to. And if you feel more comfortable, you’re more comfortable to learn and feel more embraced, and you’ll most likely see a change in students that you have, simply because of just being comfortable with someone of like skin, of like character, and all that good stuff.

Benjamin was one of the participants who mentioned that African American males break stereotypes. Benjamin stated:

They have a tremendous impact on all races of kids. For kids that look like them, they show them that there’s other ways to exist, there’s other methods to make it besides you know, the stereotypical things; sports, entertaining, drugs, and stuff like that. A lot of male figures, African Americans, serve as father figures in the school or even indirectly. Even if they don’t want to accept that role, it’s a role for a lot of them, because unfortunately, a lot of our kids grow up in homes with no fathers. I was lucky to have a father in the home, and I had many African American male teachers. So, you know, I had good foundations for that, but there’s so many kids that never see an African American male in any kind of leadership role. And so, you know, if I never see anybody look like me in a role like that, then how do I know I can serve in a role like that? So even for
White kids and other students, you know, they show you that all Black people are not stereotypical Black people. What you might hear or what you might think and perceive. We are educated. We have sense. So, the impact is, I just think that there’s ways that we can impact kids that other people cannot.

Jayce also mentioned African American males break stereotypes:

There is a need, because for one, I think me being an African American male teacher, especially in the secondary level for all kids, no matter what their races are, I break stereotypes when you see me. You know, I’m able to build relationships and be that male role model for African American males, and even young ladies who don’t have a father, which a lot of us don’t.

Participants also mentioned African American male teachers provide support and discipline at schools. Hezekiah said:

I believe, and experience, having a male teacher makes a difference on a student’s life. A lot of times, they again, want to see a male, a strong male being able to lead and guide them and listen to them. Because sometimes they’re able to take it different from a male teacher. Take guidance or directions from a male teacher than a female teacher, and a lot of times I’ve been in the classroom, I’ve went to another classroom that was a female, and the same thing they said, I took them outside and said the same thing. They were able to receive it better, being able to provide that different perspective.

Hezekiah further added, “We use African American males as a disciplinarian, and I think shift the atmosphere and the culture of the school.”

In summary, many participants in this study expressed that a former teacher, experience they encountered, or their desire to be a role model to young African American students led them to becoming teachers. Most participants indicated they wanted to be a role model to students looking for guidance. Participants expressed they have a huge impact on all students and that being in the father figure role to several students is something they take pride in. Several participants in this study indicated they became a teacher because of an experience they had, a family member, or a teacher they had during their PK-12 journey. Lastly, participants indicated they believe they make an impact on all students they encounter. Some participants mentioned one of the biggest impacts they make is breaking negative stereotypes of African American
males. These variables are some of the reason why African American males enter the education field.

**Theme 2: Low Salary, Alternative Career Options, and Perceptions of a Teaching Career are Reasons That African American Male Do Not Choose to Enter the Teaching Profession**

The second theme that emerged was that low salary, alternative career options, and perceptions of the teaching profession are reasons African American males do not enter the teaching profession. This theme explored the following subthemes: (a) finances and pay scale, (b) other career interests, and (c) perceptions of the teaching profession.

**Finances and Pay Scale.** Throughout the interviews, all participants indicated low salary for teachers was a major reason African American males did choose teaching as a career. Participants mentioned it is difficult to take care of a family on such a low salary; because of that low salary, African American males often look to other more lucrative careers. Participants also said due to the low pay, it is hard to attract more African American male teachers to become teachers. Additionally, participants mentioned they want to leave the classroom and move into administration because they will receive an increase in pay that permits them more financial freedom. Lastly, participants expressed to supplement their income, they coach or take on other duties to get stipends to help with the salary.

When interviewing participants, most said the low pay makes it difficult to provide for a family. They also mentioned they must take on multiple tasks at work or get a second job to supplement their pay. Bobby said, “Right now, it is hard on teachers, man. No way a teacher is supposed to put into what they put into these kids and must get two jobs.” Several participants said low pay would be a reason for them to consider leaving the teaching profession. Cullen stated:
Finances play a huge role. In any career. A lot of times, you know, we look for jobs in other sectors outside of education, you are allowed to negotiate your salary. I feel like that’s something that should be visited in education as well. When you know what you bring to the table. Your experience. Even, not so much your scores, but more if you were able to bring some type of portfolio of the students that you’ve touched. You know, how, you know, in undergrad we would do those surveys at the end of our college courses, you know, if we had students do that, and the school kept a file on the teachers and that’s something that you can carry with you. If we did that, and was able to pay teachers their real worth, you would see people staying in the classroom and staying in the schools and not doing it for 5 or 6 years, or 3 years at least, and bouncing to something else.

When participants were asked about the impact of low pay possibly making African American males hesitant to choose education as a career, Fisher noted:

It does play a role in attracting African American males to the teaching profession. Everyone knows if you’re a teacher, you’re not going to be rich, but everyone wants to be comfortable, and especially in this day and age you know, everyone wants to make a decent living, and you know teaching has that stigma that you’re not going to make that much money, and things like that.

Benjamin further added:

It’s a huge thing. Because I mean, just in our culture, we’re taught that you need to be financially strong, stable. Especially if you’re a family man. It’s very difficult to do so alone, you know, as a primary provider.

Avery further emphasized, “Money is always going to attract you. You want to have a profession where, well not a profession, but put in a situation where you can take care of your family comfortably.” Camron expressed low pay is the number one reason African American males do not want to enter the teaching profession. Camron believed it is hard to raise a family on a teacher salary and teachers are the people who give everyone else their start in life. Camron believes teachers should be compensated more than what they have been, stated:

It definitely plays a major role today. I’ve been teaching for 46 years, and that’s one of my major complaints about teaching. It might be good that I’m not in it for the money, because I would’ve quit. I think that African American males know, we have to be the head of the household. And it’s kind of difficult to raise a family on the money that African American males are making, and so they feel like they need to go to something better. I know you haven’t asked me this question; it may come up and it may not come up, but if you just had an idea of what I started making, of course I just wanted to be a
teacher. Always wanted to be a teacher from childhood, elementary school. And the amount of money . . . I was shocked to learn what you were making as a teacher. If I’m allowed to share this, my 1st year teaching I made $7,300 a year. We were getting paid once a month, around $463 a month. What African American male is going to go and, of course the cost of living has made a lot of things change now. But African American males don’t make the kind of money. I think, and I’m gonna be quiet, I know you have a timeframe, and I say this all the time. Teachers in general, not just male teachers, should be making the kind of money that these athletes are making. Why? Because we give everybody their start. Everybody. The athletes, the musicians, the movie stars, whoever makes a lot of money, they had to get their start from a teacher. There might be one or two out there, but that’s an exception. There are those who inherited money, you know, but everybody gets their start from a teacher, and teachers are the least paid.

Some participants in this study mentioned they would like to retire, but they continue to work because they cannot afford to retire now. Other participants indicated they plan to move to administration to earn a larger income. Manuel said that he would like to retire, but he is unable to do so due to his teacher salary. This limitation has driven him to pursue a move to administration to increase his income. Cullen was another participant who mentioned African American males move to administration because of the pay. Cullen said:

I believe that plays a huge role, because a lot of times those African American men who do stay in education leave the classroom, and I think one of the major reasons they do that is for pay increase. Because we know administrators get paid more and a tad bit more freedom when you’re not bogged down with lesson plans, and things of that nature.

A few participants mentioned having the opportunity to get stipends and supplement income is a way to mitigate the low pay. Steven, a high school science teacher and football coach, said these stipends help pay his salary and could be used to recruit more African American males. Steven stated:

You know, it’s nice to have a situation where you could possibly make more money also still doing the things that you really want to do with your students. For instance, coaching sports, being a school newspaper editor person, or being on the yearbook committee, you know, all of these University Interscholastic League[UIL] or Louisiana High School
Athletic Association [LHSA], you know, scholastic events. That’s the thing that I think evens out the, I guess the phobia of not being able to make money in education.

Some participants mentioned the ability to earn stipends is a reason there are typically more African American males at the secondary level versus the elementary level. A few participants said without the stipends, they would not be able to remain a teacher because of the low salary. Benjamin said:

When I say that you have more African American men in the secondary level, that’s probably one reason why. Most of them are football coaches, and you know, coaches, and stuff like that. So, you get a stipend for that. If it was not stipends, then you would lose a lot of African American men. You’d lose a lot of men, period. Honestly, and truly, if I wasn’t a coach and got a coach’s stipend, I know for sure I couldn’t financially stay in the job. It wouldn’t be worth it.

Other Career Interests. Participants in this study expressed African American males do not enter the teaching profession is because they have other career interests that pay more or may seem to pay more. Participants mentioned young African American males are often interested in careers like professional sports, social media influencing, engineering, or some type of trade. Each of these careers pay more than what the teaching profession pays, and they may present as more exciting career paths for young African American males. Teachers make about 20 percent less than other professionals with similar education and experience (Hadavi, 2020). Some participants mentioned the teaching profession is a profession not marketed to young African American males as a career for them to pursue. Participants mentioned young African American males do not want to enter the teaching profession because they do not want to deal with the many challenges a teacher must deal with.

When interviewing participants in this study, several indicated young African American males are interested in other careers that pay more or seem more exciting. Today, young African American males view the professional athlete or the popular social media influencer as their role
model (Ypulse, 2019). These professions make a large income seem fun and exciting, and do not have the stigma of a feminine profession that teaching does. Some participants said when they tried to expose the teaching profession to their male students, they already had plans of wanting to pursue careers in engineering, law, or medicine. Samuel felt young African American males have a plethora of career options that excite their interest more than the teaching profession. Samuel believed other careers that are more lucrative and have widespread exposure to African American males occupy their attention. Samuel also believed if young African American males have a negative experience in school, such an experience will deter them away from pursuing a career in the teaching profession. Samuel added:

I would say different interests, and so things that are more lucrative as far as like in finances, engineering, and then some of it is just those experiences they had. They’re own high school experience, you know, nothing for them really made them want to pursue teaching as a whole. I think just interest level is what’s hurting, and what they’re into. They’re not growing up thinking about you can become a teacher, you can become this, and that. It’s you can go and do this, or I can do that, and others is you can become TikTok famous, or become a rapper. All that, and this is what kids are trying to do. Blow up on TikTok, on social media. Some want to rap, some want to sell, others just . . . or it could be, not start teaching, but they’d rather to do the hands-on feel. They don’t mind getting their hands dirty, they want to work on cars, they want to do landscaping, that type of thing.

Eugene said a lack of respect for the teaching profession and students seeing the stress African American male teachers are under makes them not want to become a teacher. Eugene stated:

I would say the lack of interest. Granted, you know, these young people who are coming out of school, out of high school, they are looking at how they were and how people were around them, and the teachers they had to deal with. So they are not interested in that. The dynamics of how teachers are respected has shifted steadily. At one time teachers, you know, they were. if you were a teacher, you were somebody. You know, people dreamed and aspired of being so well thought of as an educator. And that has changed. And I have to say that it’s changed because in some ways, and I have a lot of teacher friends, and when I’m looking at many of them, you know, not to judge harshly, but they don’t act like teachers. They don’t act like teachers. I mean, they carry themselves like the students or anybody else, you know, teachers were always looked at like dignified,
polished. That’s just not what you see for the most part anymore. There are a few left, but overall, not. That along with the content area, some of the students may not be interested in, and I would say probably the pay.

One participant expressed he was considering leaving the teaching field to pursue other career opportunities. His main reason for wanting to leave the teaching profession was for financial reasons. He mentioned there were other careers where he could earn more money and deal with less stress. Some participants also mentioned the teaching profession is not marketed to young African American males. Benjamin believed the teaching profession is not introduced to young African American males as a career that makes adequate money. Benjamin stated:

It’s not an occupation that’s pushed on us, on African American men you know, outside of coaching. That’s probably the biggest thing. I don’t want to keep talking about money, but they know it’s no real financial potential there. Unless you become an administrator. Most people are not trying to become an administrator. So that’s probably the biggest things.

Jayce similarly believed young African American males lack knowledge on the teaching field and the opportunities available to people who become teachers. He also indicated that because young African American males normally see White females as their teachers, they do not identify themselves as working in that profession. Jayce added:

I would also say opportunities. The educational field is, to the real world, if you’re being realistic, is a profession that’s mostly white women. Mostly white women work in the profession. So I don’t think that it is a profession that is, I wouldn’t say the word cater, but I don’t think it is marketed to African Americans, males, in a way that has them interested in being teachers or being administrators or working within the profession. I think that’s one of the main reasons. They don’t know that, hey, this is an opportunity. This is an option for you, and I think that if there was more access to that information, then you’d probably see a spike in African American males becoming interested in being teachers.

Participants in this study expressed African American males have so many other career options that pay more and seem more exciting, thereby gaining their interest. The participants believed to recruit more African American males into the teaching profession, pay has to become
more competitive, the profession has to be marketed more to African American males, and these students have to be shown the different opportunities they can have by becoming a teacher. Also, participants emphasized if African American males are not shown they are needed, there will continue to be a shortage of African American male teachers.

Perceptions of the Teaching Profession. The participants interviewed in this study indicated because the teaching profession is majority female, the profession takes on a feminine image. Participants mentioned this slant can turn potential African American male teachers away from the profession because it contributes to the perception that teaching is exclusively a career for women. Moreover, participants mentioned because there are so many women in the profession, a male who enters the profession is automatically thrust into a disciplinarian role. A couple of participants even expressed that because the teaching profession is female dominant, it plays a role in the low pay for teachers.

Throughout this study, participants indicated the teaching field is female dominated and this plays a role in the perception of the teaching profession. Participants believed this imbalance is another reason it is difficult to recruit African American males to the education field. Several participants mentioned during their PK–12 journeys, almost all of their teachers were female.

Terrance said:

Over the course of, you know me going to school, you know, K–12 or even now, you know, on other side as a teacher, you know as majority female, like I said I felt I had four Black male teachers. Other than that, like I said I’m trying to think how many other male teachers I had in general. Not very many are except majority of my teachers were female you know throughout K–12. So, I mean, yeah, that’s probably the perception to us, you know, the profession is majority women so why do I need to get in that field.

Samuel also shared a similar viewpoint to Terrance, and added:

Growing up I think there was always that stigma, because you always saw a female teacher in these roles. Teaching kids, it was always a woman doing it. I think there may still be that little stigma there because it is a women-dominated field. I think that could
play a role in getting more African American males in the profession. I guess, just again, it’s going to take seeing more males in the position.

Fisher also added:

Most of the time, when someone thinks of education or the teachers in particular, even if it’s African American, they’re gonna assume, you know, female. Because that’s what you know, the vast majority, that’s what people always see, so they actually need to see the males in those core things. That could be a piece of a major PR campaign.

A couple of participants expressed that because the teaching profession is mainly made up of females, there is a subsequent effect on pay standards for the profession. Benjamin felt because the teaching profession is female dominated, it effects the pay scale; additionally, African American males are automatically placed into a disciplinarian role as a result. Benjamin stated:

It is historically a feminine job, and we’re only here to service as disciplinaries and coaches. That was your job. That’s one reason why I think the salary is what it is. Because it’s such a feminine-based job. You know, perception is it’s a feminine job. So, you know, most of the women that taught back in historical times in the past, these were married women, and they was just doing something to sort of meet their husbands income to the house. They weren’t asked to be [unintelligible] and stuff like that. Today, it’s not the same. You had all of them women retire, you know, we’re in a period of heavy retirement, and so that’s why you’re in a situation with a teacher shortage.

Jayce also believed that because young African American male students see nothing but women teaching, it affects how they view the teaching profession. Jayce felt by seeing African American males in the classroom, it helps break the stigma and shows African American students they can be successful in the teaching profession. Jayce even believed that when African American males are teachers, there are many opportunities presented to them due to the shortage of them in the sector. Jayce stated:

I think that we see as African American males, we see this as, oh, that’s a job for women, and you have to tell, it’s all about you know, how we were brought up in our culture. There aren’t any jobs for women or men. Men can be just as successful and just as effective as a woman who teaches kindergarten, or as a woman who teaches ninth, 10th, 11th or 12th grade.
Some participants mentioned African American males’ school experiences contribute to their perceptions of the teaching profession. If an African American male student has a negative experience in their PK–12 education journey, they may not want to become a teacher. Participants also mentioned that when African American males hear negative things about teaching, such rhetoric deters them from wanting to become a teacher. Steven stated, “People outside of the teaching profession hear third party horror stories and that deters them away from the profession.”

Theme 2 highlights low salary, alternative career options, and perceptions of the teaching profession as reasons African American males do not become teachers. During the interviews, all participants indicated low salary was a reason African American males do not become teachers and leave the education field. Participants expressed low salary makes it difficult to raise a family and will often cause an African American male to coach or take on several other responsibilities to supplement their income. Also, due to the low salary, over half of the participants expressed they plan to pursue an administrative position to earn more income. Participants also indicated African American males have a plethora of more lucrative careers that they are interested in, and this causes African American males not to enter the teaching profession. Lastly, participants expressed that since the teaching profession is dominated by women, the profession takes on a feminine image. This unbalance of gender in the profession can turn potential African American male teachers away from the profession because it contributes to the perception that teaching is a career exclusively for women.
Theme 3: The Praxis Test and the Certification Process are a Hurdle for African American Male Teachers Entering Into the Teaching Profession

The third theme was the praxis test and certification process are hurdles for African American males wanting to become a teacher. This theme explored the following subthemes: (a) difficulty of passing the praxis exams, and (b) cost of praxis exams.

Difficulty of Passing Praxis Exams. Participants mentioned passing the praxis exams was a big reason African American males do not become teachers. The praxis exam is a test that measures the knowledge and skills a teacher needs to prepare for the classroom (ets.org, 2021). To become a certified teacher, a person must pass the Praxis I test, which measures someone’s knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics. Once someone passes Praxis I, the next test is the Praxis II test, which focuses on a specific subject content knowledge. Lastly, once those two tests are passed, the final test comprises the principal for learning and teaching test (Praxis exams, 2021). Participants in this study mentioned these tests are biased and do not determine if someone will make a good teacher. Participants also indicated because many African American males struggle to pass the tests, they choose not to become a teacher, or they go teach at a charter or private school. Over half participants interviewed mentioned they became a certified teacher through an alternative teaching program.

The praxis exam presents a hurdle for potential African American male teachers, because many of them struggle to pass the test. Some participants expressed they furthered their education by getting a master’s degree to bypass having to take Praxis I. Avery believed the praxis test is the main reason African American males do not become teachers. Avery stated:

I think that Praxis exam is the predominant reason why we as African American males don’t teach. I had a hard time passing the first part, you know, the general knowledge. But with me obtaining my master’s degree, I bypassed that. So, I knew if I wanted to bypass this first point, which I was having trouble with, I’m gonna go ahead and get my master’s degree. So, I did that.
Some participants interviewed said they felt the praxis test are biased and do not
determine if someone is going to be a good teacher. Camron was very adamant about his views
on the praxis test. Camron stated:

I do think that is a reason many don’t enter the teaching profession. And I’m not sure if
your second part of your question . . . you did say why or why not? I feel like the test is
biased. It is unfair, and I’ve never believed that a test can measure or determine a good
teacher. I think that is one of the worst things that is done. Giving a person a test to
determine what kind of teacher they’re gonna be, and I feel that the state, the country, etc.
is losing good teachers because of the Praxis exam. Maybe going a little long with this,
but my philosophy question has always been “Who is intelligent enough to make a test to
determine what everybody else ought to know?”

Some participants mentioned potential African American male teachers have a phobia of taking
tests. They expressed due to the cost of the test and the pressure of trying to pass the test to
become certified, many potential African American male teachers struggle to pass the test.
Steven felt the praxis exam should not be the determining factor for someone to become a
teacher. Steven said:

So, in being me, Steven, and giving my thoughts, I truly think that we as an ethnicity
have a phobia of taking tests. It doesn’t always clearly exhibit our true knowledge base,
you know. It’s sometimes the wording and the rhetoric of the questions that I guess you
would say isn’t ethnically sensitive. You know, because a lot of the ways that they
compose the questions is kind of written into the vernacular that isn’t native to say,
African Americans, or, you know, they use a choice of words that isn’t common, you
know, it isn’t a straight-based question.

Maddox also mentioned praxis exams are not designed for minorities to be successful, and the
process of becoming certified is another hurdle that can push potential African American male
teachers to look at other careers. Maddox stated:

I think standardized testing in general has an effect on African American males, and just
minorities in general. The tests, to me, are not designed for success in our community. So
I really feel like that hinders or deters people from actually pursuing that, because I don’t
want to take a certification again. It just seems like a lot of hurdles to get into the
classroom. I do feel like there should be some type of accountability for that, like you
have to get certified, but I don’t know if it has to be as strenuous or as long of a process
as we have to be able to teach.
Because the praxis is needed to become a certified teacher and many potential African American male teachers struggle to pass, participants expressed students consequently miss out on good teachers and coaches who can make an impact on them. Many participants felt not properly answering a question on a test was not indicative of inadequacy as a teacher. Gavin stated:

I think it’s a large part, a very large part. You have a lot of good teachers and individuals that can reach youth, children, students, that are being held back because of the standardized tests. You might be able to answer correctly on paper, but that paper is not going to translate into the classroom. You can have a multiple choice question, we’re going to handle Raheem or Sally with a certain protocol, but they’re not giving you the insight that Raheem and Sally is dealing with being the man, or woman, the provider of their home, and they’re stressed out, and they’re trying to be a student as well. So not obeying standardized testing can measure how can you get this kid, how can you get the best out of this individual and get this child, this student, to perform at a high level. I don’t think standardized tests can measure that.

Over half participants interviewed mentioned they knew an African American male who could not pass the praxis exam after several tries. The participants said the individual either walked away from becoming a teacher or took a different, nonteaching role within the school.

Manuel stated:

I can’t tell you how many young guys I know who want to be teachers but can’t pass the Praxis. So, they change their majors to something just so they can still graduate in four years, and just kind of walked away from being a teacher.

Benjamin further added:

The Praxis exams are difficult. Therefore, they deter many people from entering the profession. I know people that have tried many times, and they can’t seem to pass it. So therefore, they are forced out of the profession. Or they just volunteered to give up, or they accept some lower role.

Hezekiah was another participant who shared a similar view to Benjamin when it came to potential African American male teachers trying to pass the praxis test. Hezekiah mentioned, “I
do feel that the difficulty of passing the Praxis exam kind of makes male teachers not want to continue their journey in education. I guess, again, due to the difficulty, trying to pass the test.”

Many participants interviewed indicated they earned their teaching certification through an alternative teaching certification program. Many participants expressed becoming a teacher was not their original career choice; yet they decided to enter the teaching profession to impact lives and give back to the community. Many participants also expressed they had trouble passing the Praxis I exam, so they pursued a graduate degree to bypass having to take the exam. Several participants went through the iTeach alternative teaching certification program. The iTeach alternative teaching certification program is a private alternative teacher certification program that allows someone to earn their teaching certification at their own pace on their time. Some participants expressed there should be other options to become certified, other than having to go through the iTeach program. Participants also mentioned the cost of the iTeach program can serve as a detractor for potential African American males wanting to become teachers. A few participants in this study indicated there should be different options to become a certified teacher to attract more African American male teachers. Carlos said, “I think it should have other options, other than the praxis test. I will say that.”

Costs of Praxis Exams. During the interview process, participants expressed the difficulty of passing the praxis exams where a big reason African American males do not become teachers. Participants also expressed the cost of these exams and the time and preparation it takes to pass these exams as another reason African American males choose not to become teachers. The cost of the Praxis I test is $150 and combines reading, writing, and mathematics. For an individual test, the cost is $90. Once a teacher passes Praxis I, they move to Praxis II, which focuses on a content area. There are two costs for this test. The first cost is $120
for a multiple-choice-only test, and the second cost $146 for a test that is multiple choice and has constructed response on it (ets.org, 2021) After passing both Praxis I and II, the teacher must pass the praxis principal of learning and teaching test (PLC) to become fully certified. The cost of the test is $146. Participants mentioned having to take this test multiple times puts a financial burden and pressure on African American males who want to enter the teaching profession.

Participants indicated the cost and time it takes to prepare for the praxis exam can deter African American males from wanting to become teachers. If a prospective teacher fails to pass the test, they must wait a month before retaking the test. Seeing as many teachers take this test while in undergraduate studies, these costs put a lot of pressure on someone to make sure they pass the test to graduate. One participant Jayce said the test is not difficult, but the cost of the test makes it difficult for some African Americans to register for the test. Jayce said:

I don’t think it’s the difficulty, I think it has more so to do with the financial portion of taking the tests over and over or having to pay for the test yourself out-of-pocket. I think that keeps a lot of people from coming into the profession, because you have to look at it like, okay, I’m going to school for this, and then I have to turn around and take a test on what I’ve learned at school, and I’ve already paid for, so a lot of people, they shy away from things like that. They just want it cut and dry. But I wouldn’t say difficulty because that would be saying that, you know, African American males, you know, can’t pass the test, and that’s not true, because I passed all of them on the first try. I think it has more so to do with the financial portion of having to take all those exams and come out of pocket while you’re doing it.

Hezekiah further added, “Cost and time to prepare for the praxis test push African American males away from the profession.” Another participant, Lewis, mentioned money and the process itself are two reasons African American males do not enter the teaching profession. Lewis stated:

I think money is a huge thing, as well as the process. Money and the process will, I mean, there’s things that pay bills and time, which is something you cannot buy. So, if they see that the process is not as easy as going up to the local plant and applying there and even if you find out there that you have other steps as well. But I think the process and the money deter people a lot, especially male educators, of staying in and getting in the field.
Theme 3 highlights the praxis test and certification process as hurdles that keep African American males from entering the teaching profession. The two subthemes attached to Theme 3 was difficulty passing the praxis exams and the cost of the praxis exams. Participants mentioned that African American males struggling to pass the praxis causes many African American males to take another career route or accept a lesser role in education. Some participants expressed that the exams are culturally bias and not designed for minorities to be successful on them. Several participants also indicated when the praxis keeps African American males from teaching, students are missing out on the impact African American male teachers can make. Participants also noted that the cost of the praxis exam can hinder African American males becoming teachers. The different praxis exams that someone has to pass for certification can become very expensive especially when you do not pass the exam. Several participants mentioned that cost and time to prepare for the praxis exam will push African American males to other careers.

**Theme 4: African American Male Teachers Attribute Being Forced Into Disciplinarian Roles and Having a Lack of Administrative Support as Reasons African American Male Teachers are Leaving the Profession**

The fourth theme that emerged was participants attributed being forced into disciplinarian roles and not having support from administration as reasons African American male teachers leave the teaching profession. This theme explored two subthemes: (a) African American male teachers in disciplinarian roles, and (b) African American male teacher’s lack of support from administration.

**Disciplinarian Role.** When interviewing participants, they expressed they have often been viewed as disciplinarians, whether they wanted the role or not. As African American males, participants said they often took on an extra role where they provided extra support or were viewed as an enforcer to strike fear into students to behave correctly. Participants also mentioned
being placed in this role can lead to burnout and that African American male are not automatically disciplinarians. Lastly, participants mentioned most of the time, when they get asked to advance in position, they are asked to move to administration to become an assistant principal of discipline.

Several participants expressed their frustration in automatically being labeled as a disciplinarian because they are an African American male. One participant, Terrance, said, “First off, they need to stop thinking of them as you know, disciplinarians because again, if I’m a teacher in the classroom, I’m there to teach.” Several participants mentioned being forced into a disciplinarian role sometimes made it difficult to immerse themselves in the subjects they taught to be the best for their students. Cullen felt many African American males do not want to become teachers because they cannot just be a teacher; rather, they are often asked to take on several other roles within the school. Cullen said, “African American male teachers are always getting somewhat typecast into being a coach of some sort or a disciplinary figure, instead of being able to engulf yourself in your subject that you study.” Maddox expressed:

I think that the African American male secondary teacher is vital to any campus, and like I said, we keep saying not just as a disciplinarian, or not just as a coach, not just as an administrator. We have to eliminate that stereotype of disciplinarian or coach like that’s the only thing that you’re capable of doing.

African American male teachers indicated being viewed as an enforcer and having to provide extra support to students was a reason to leave the profession. Participants expressed feeling overwhelmed when having to take on the issues of some of their students, which led to burnout. Manuel stated:

One of the things that that I think does happen and why, you know, you become the like one of our students called me “the Black boy whisperer.” You know, you become the Black boy whisperer for every Black boy in school, and that’s a whole lot of work, and I think you’re gonna get burnt out. And you won’t be satisfied with the job. Because you came to do one thing, and now you’re doing everything for everybody. The females rely
heavily upon them to be the disciplinarians. You become the Black boy whisperer in the school, and so every kid they have a problem with, you know, they drop by your room or “Hey, can you talk to so and so.” And so I think sometimes the weight of the responsibility is just so much, just relegated to whether they’re females, whether it’s a female dominated profession. I also think it is that idea of the expectation of what it means to be a Black man in a school, and what you’re supposed to be bringing to the table.

Benjamin also noted being an African American male does not automatically equate to serving as a disciplinarian or a coach. Benjamin stated:

We always are used as disciplinarians. Every Black man is not a disciplinarian. They’re just not, they don’t even have that kind of thing about them, that physique and attitude about themselves. So, what’s their strengths? They’re not all football coaches. Some of them are just teachers. Some are academic based. Use them people. Find out what their strengths are. See what you can do, ask them what you can do to keep them there. Not just we gave him a job and so be happy.

The majority participants in this study expressed that when African American males are limited to a disciplinarian or a coach, they are limited in their capacity to help with lasting impact at the school. Several participants indicated they enjoy teaching and want to just teach and not have to be a disciplinary figure. African American male teachers indicated being limited to a disciplinarian or a coach leads to them seeking out opportunities outside of the teaching profession. Maddox stated:

I think that they are not being used to their greatest potential. Which leads to some type of dissatisfaction. A lot of times in the education system, they look at African American males as disciplinarians, and we’re not. Anybody can discipline anybody, but that’s not our sole source. That’s not why you should hire us because you think that we will be good at disciplining people who look like us., and that leads to, you know, you only wanted me for this, but I have all of these other capabilities at my disposal, but I’m being a disciplinarian. Especially when you’re an assistant principal, when you move into things like that, that’s automatically what they put you on, because they feel like that’s one of your strong suits. But I think with that, not allowing, you know, us to grow into individuals who can truly bring our interests and the things that we’ve acquired over time and through our experiences to the table to help better the educational system.

Lastly, participants indicated when African American males are presented with the opportunity to advance to the administrative level, it is normally to be an assistant principal over
discipline or behavior. Carlos believed African American males are used as disciplinary figures because “young Black boys respond better to Black males and Black males are normally coaches who help get everyone in line at school.” Benjamin mentioned:

I will say I don’t feel like it’s incredibly difficult for an African American to become an administrator, an African American man. Now I think it’s hard for women, but not for men. They’ll let the men be administrators. Part of its discipline. So, they put you in an old podunk school and pay you $80,000.

**Lack of Support from Administration.** Participants indicated not having support from their administration was a reason African American males would leave the profession. Over half of participants in this study expressed that the relationship between teachers and the administration is negative. Participants indicated not having much control nor influence on selecting the content, topics, and skills they teach in their classrooms has a negative effect on them. Participants also expressed administrators giving them large classroom rosters, work during their planning periods, and short deadlines as other examples of not having support from administration.

Having a negative relationship with administration can really make the teaching profession an extremely tough job. Moreover, a negative relationship with administration can lead to a negative culture within the school. Participants expressed that administration plays a big role in retention of teachers. The administration helps create the culture of the school and provide support for teachers. Participants indicated there will continue to be a shortage if administrations are not proactive in creating cultures that African American male teachers want to work in.

Maddox said:

What are you doing at those campuses to keep those teachers there? What is the culture like for these teachers? What support do these teachers have? What are you pouring into the teachers that they can utilize if they decide to move around or move upward? So just bringing in all those factors, what are you doing at the campus level and district level to
support and retain your teachers to make sure that they don’t burn out or want to leave or lose that satisfaction?

Many participants in this study mentioned not having much control nor influence in selecting the content, topics, or skills they teach in their classrooms; this lack of control was noted as another reason African American male teachers feel a lack of support from administration. Some participants mentioned being experts in their subjects, but they are always given different curriculums they must teach under observation. Bobby stated, “Teachers are really limited on how they can control their classroom. The whole teaching content, the different curriculums that they have to teach over time leads to African American male teachers feeling not supported.”

Cullen further added, “not having support from administration or your school boards and other central office workers” affects how African American male teachers are supported.

Many participants indicated not having support from administration, citing large class sizes, extra work during their planning periods, and short deadlines to get things turned around. Lewis was one of several participants who expressed “having a large classroom roster which makes classroom management difficult and getting through curriculum and professional learning goals makes teaching difficult.” Over half of participants mentioned they have to take work home because they do not have time at work. Several participants mentioned during their planning periods, they have other duties assigned to them. Such covering another class, IEP meetings, PLC meetings, and lunch duty. By not having support from the administration and having a heavy workload, it has led to several African American male teachers describing a feeling of being overburdened. Participants also mentioned they could use more administrative support and awareness around behavioral interventions for students and more relevant and personalized professional development options. Terrance stated, “Administrators have to have a culture where they show appreciation for outstanding teaching. Teachers need autonomy while
also feeling supported and appreciated.” Gavin said, “Students lose when teachers are in overcrowded classrooms and have several different accommodations to meet.”

Theme 4 focused on African American male teachers feeling like they are forced into disciplinarian roles and not having support from administration as reasons African American males leave the teaching profession. Many participants in this study expressed they are viewed as disciplinarians at their school rather they want the role or not. Participants mentioned that having to automatically take on the role of disciplinarian can lead to burnout and cause African American males to leave the education field. Also, some participants indicated that if they are there to teach, they should be viewed as a teacher and not someone who has to be an enforcer and manage behavior. Lastly, participants indicated not having support from administration will cause African American males to leave the education field. When African American male teachers are forced to be a disciplinarian and feel they don’t have support from their administration, this will lead to African American males exiting the education field.

**Theme 5: African American Male Teachers and School District’s Role in Recruitment and Retention**

The fifth and final theme that emerged from the interviews was African American male teachers felt they and their school districts contribute to retention and recruitment. This theme explored the following subthemes: (a) African American male teachers encourage African American males to become educators, and (b) school district personnel need to discover how to best recruit and retain African American male teachers.

**African American Male Teachers Encourage African American Males to Become Educators.** African American male teachers expressed it is part of their responsibility to recruit more African American males to become teachers. Participants believed they can help recruit more African American males if they can show themselves having success and generating
impact. Moreover, participants believed they could recruit more African American males by breaking the negative stereotype of teaching and positioning teaching as a rewarding profession.

Majority of the participants expressed that while they teach, they try to identify students who would be well-suited the profession. Some participants who have sons mentioned they recruited their own children to enter the profession. Avery stated, “I have two sons. They play college football. And I mentioned, you know, why don’t you try to get into coaching?” Even participants in this study without sons mentioned that when they see a young African American male who is smart, patient, and likes helping others, they try to recruit them into the profession. Eugene said:

I have encouraged those that I saw that they were geared toward helping others, that they liked working with young people. And that when they expressed an interest in it, and it’s always been those who expressed interest in it, because they were self-driven and motivated. And they were those types of students and people that you could clearly see them as educators.

Gavin shared a similar viewpoint to Eugene, stating, “Kids that I see that are natural leaders, and they actually take time with their teammates and make sure everybody’s good, yeah I do drop that in their ear.” A few participants mentioned recruiting more African American males to become teachers is a way for them to make an impact other than just in the classroom. Fisher said:

We have a positive impact on the development of other African American young men. And so, they’ll just be continuing, you know, basically, that legacy of doing the same thing. And like I said, the people who have been molded that I encourage are usually people who have expressed, you know, some story or some incidents where they were motivated to go into education, because, you know, they felt that the teachers were good role models, and it was something that they could see that they were doing, or they realized the positive impact that the teachers had on the students. And that’s something that they want to continue doing because they can see themselves doing.
A few participants indicated they have tried to recruit friends and fraternity brothers to become teachers. These participants expressed they have offered to help with the certification process and with landing a teaching position. Maddox said:

I’ve had a lot of friends that . . . I’ve been in education for 10 years, so across the 10 years, I’ve helped teachers, people work through the process of becoming a teacher. So, encouraging people when people are like, I don’t know what to do. I’ve got this degree now. “Hey, come teach, you’re needed, you’re valued in education.”

Cullen mentioned having fraternity brothers he consistently recruits to enter the teaching profession:

I’m in a fraternity, and we have, after you graduate you go to homecoming and meet the younger members of the organization and you run into those brothers, the young men who are pursuing education or have an idea, you know, I tell them the pros and the cons. But the major thing is that they understand that teaching is service. I think there’s a huge thing that’s missed when we are grooming young educators is that they need to understand that teaching is service. And that’s what I tell them, you know, it is more than just showing up at 6:30 in the morning and leaving at 2:30. You have to be prepared and dedicated to impacting lives. And as a man of faith, I do feel like you know, people who take education and really concern themselves with the kids. You are blessed in the long run. Might not be with pay, but I call it “soul pay” like your soul is blissful.

Jayce was another participant in a Greek letter organization; he described trying to recruit some of his fraternity brothers who needed career direction or exhibited qualities that would make a good teacher. Jayce expressed:

I’m in a Greek organization, and I have friends who are trying to figure out what they want to do with their lives after college, and I always tell them teaching is one of the most rewarding professions ever. Not only do you get to, you know, teach and touch people and transform people, but you get transformed through the relationships that you build with kids. It’s two-way. It’s not just me teaching, I’m learning from kids, and if you have an open mind you truly can learn from them. So I have, I actually was having a conversation with one of my frat brothers last week, and he was actually like . . . he’s at this little summer camp, and I was like, you probably want to look into teaching. I said, you don’t have to do it for the rest of your life. But I said, just do it to see how much you truly like it. Because it’s an experience that I think that most of us need, and you get to truly give back to your community.
Some participants said they encourage African American males to enter the profession because there is not enough representation of African American male teachers. Hezekiah mentioned he had success recruiting a friend from college to become a teacher. Hezekiah said:

I have encouraged other African American males to come into the teaching field. Because again, we need a bigger representation, and I can say one of my ways of doing that, I actually did it this year, I had a friend of mine who just had graduated, had no idea that he wanted to be a teacher, he had no kind of drive to want to teach, and now he’s teaching just because they invited him to be a full-time sub, and now he’s pursuing a teaching certification.

**How School Districts Can Recruit and Retain African American Male Teachers.** In this study, participants indicated school district leaders must be proactive in recruiting and retention of African American males to increase the number of African American male teachers. Participants expressed that school districts can pay more, give African American males major roles as teaching leaders, show African American male teachers having success as teachers, and be visible at job fairs in the community and at local colleges. Participants further added school districts can create programs for students in high school to attract them to the profession and create programs for 1st-year teachers to provide support and retain them in the profession.

Many participants in this study indicated school districts must be more proactive in trying to attract more African American males to choose teaching as a career. Participants mentioned salary must improve and there needs to be a good working environment. Eugene said, “Pay them more money and have a good working environment.” Camron shared similar sentiments, recommending, “Increase the pay and give the African American male teacher major roles as leaders in the teaching profession, and basically just do some recruiting.” Another participant who mentioned a good working environment for African American males was Steven. Steven said:
Show that they care about them being there. So, there’s a saying, you know, we get paid to do what we do. So this is a job, you know, but it’s also a calling. So, you know, if it’s a calling, it also needs to be somewhere where you feel fit. You know, where you feel like somebody is engaging with you, pouring into you, fostering growth in you. Just because it’s a job doesn’t mean, you know, it can’t be a pleasant experience, a growing experience, and a lot of school districts, you know, they just want you to regurgitate information. They don’t necessarily want you to build the character of the kids, you know, they scream building relationships, but, you know, they keep you on a time schedule. Giving the opportunities without immoral practices of, you know, hiring and not being able to climb the ladder, because that’s what will take a lot of folks out, too. Not feeling that you have room for growth, but just give it a fair shake. Equity not equality, you know?

A few participants expressed that school districts need to engage with local colleges, especially HBCUs. Cullen believed for school district personnel to improve the number of African American males, they must:

Cultivate relationships with their local HBCUs, if any are available, and if not branch out to those universities where you have your largest number of black male majors in education. Offer them bonuses, signing incentives, and things of that nature.

Manuel further added:

I think one of the things they can do and what they don’t do is actually to have college fairs at HBCUs. Also, I think another thing is tapping into the local fraternities. Like that may sound kind of, I don’t know, elitist. But all of them have some level of service involved in it, and think appealing to them would actually be a pretty good move. Talking, going to, you know, go to a Panhel meeting, and talking to the kids, talking to the students about, “Hey, have you ever considered teaching?”

A few participants mentioned that school districts need to have programs where high school students are introduced to the teaching profession and shown there is a need for African American male teachers. Avery stated school districts can “have these education curriculums, have dual enrollment with universities and colleges so when they’re graduating from high school they’re halfway done with college because of dual enrollment. Or leading toward an education or a degree.” Jayce went in detail about how school districts can increase their representation of African American male teachers. He noted:
I think school districts need to begin teaching programs or teaching interest clubs or some type to show students while they’re in high school the benefits of being a teacher. They can go to colleges and market to students, but again, the first question the student is gonna ask is how much money I’m gonna make when I get out of college. And if that’s a low number, you’ve already lost my interest. So I think that they definitely need to be at job and career fairs as often as possible. I don’t remember the last time I’ve seen a school district at a job or career fair, maybe a school, but I’ve never seen a school district go to one. It’s been years, so I think that they need to make, and this is just for anybody, they need to do their due diligence if they want good, quality teachers. That’s why you have so many people leaving the profession, because you’re telling them that it’s this and it’s not that. So I think that they need to do whatever is necessary so they can get good quality teachers.

Some participants indicated school districts must re-recruit the African American males who are already teachers. Participants expressed it is important to re-recruit those teachers because so many of them leave, especially after only a few years in the teaching profession. Participants also felt if an African American male struggles early in their career, such adversity can cause them to want to leave the profession. Fisher expressed having a program geared toward teachers in their first couple of years to provide support could help retain many teachers. Fisher stated:

I think provide . . . I guess it would apply more so for beginning teachers, I think that they should develop some types of programs that actually help with retention, getting people to stay in education. Whether you know, it’s supplemental workshops, because believe me, the first time that someone is in a classroom, you know, it’s a lot different from student teaching. You know, sometimes it becomes very overwhelming, and, you know, you need additional resources, or, like I said, maybe some kind of training or workshop, if things like that were actually done, you know, to deal with some of the real-life things that a 1st-year teacher is dealing with. And also placing people in things, I say placing people in the proper classrooms, things that they are equipped to deal with. Because if someone has an undergraduate background in history, you don’t throw them in a science room, especially the beginning, because that’s the only thing that you have available. And it’s you know, a situation where it’s get in where you fit in, because that’s bound to be trouble, and it’s going to impact the person, because they’re going to have a negative experience and they’re just going to want to completely be away from the whole profession, because of that initial experience, you know, and that’s a major factor in people continuing on. Those beginning experiences that they have in the profession.
Summary

The findings of this study provided insight into the career choices and experiences of African American male teachers in secondary grade settings. Five themes emerged from the 17 participant interviews. Each theme discussed why African American male teachers entered and stayed in the teaching profession, analyzed the decisions of African American male teachers to leave the teaching profession, and identified issues contributing to the underrepresentation of African American male teachers.

Overall, participants expressed they chose to become teachers because they wanted to be a role model or father figure to all students. Also, participants entered the profession because of a family member, former teacher, or experience they had working with children. Several participants expressed they chose the teaching field because of the impact they believed they could make. Participants indicated African American males break stereotypes, provide a role model to all students, and relate to students who look like them.

This study also identified several factors impacting African American male teachers and their decisions to leave the education field. Participants indicated low salary for teachers was a major reason that African American males leave the education field. Over half of participants indicated low pay makes taking care of a family difficult and makes African American males want to move to administration to earn more income. A few participants indicated they take on extra responsibilities at school to earn more income, but this added responsibility can lead to burn out and less time spent with family. Participants expressed African American males often have other career interests that are more lucrative and have a more perceived image of masculinity. Participants also expressed that because the teaching profession is dominated by women, such a gender imbalance affects African American males choosing the education field as
a career. Another factor participants expressed why African American males do not enter the teaching profession is because of the difficulty passing the praxis exam and the cost of the praxis exams. Lastly, African American males expressed being sequestered to a disciplinary role as a reason that African American males would leave the teaching field.

Participants indicated they and their school district personnel must help in recruiting more African American males to the teaching field. Participants believed if they could share their success stories of teaching, they can attract more African American males to choose teaching as a career. Additionally, participants indicated school district personnel must pay more, partner with local HBCUs, and provide African American male teachers with leadership roles. Finally, some participants within the study expressed school district officials need to provide support programs for teachers in their first couple of years to try and retain African American male teachers.

During this study, 10 out of the 17 participants indicated they want to pursue an administrative role. Also, during this study, eight participants indicated they coached or sponsored an extracurricular activity at their schools. Seven participants mentioned they coach a sport and one participant stated he was an assistant band director. Some participants mentioned they wanted to move to administration for financial reason to provide greater income, and one participant mentioned he did not want an administrative role but would like to be a part of the administrative team as a curriculum coach. During the 2017–2018 school year, 78% of public-school principals were White, 11% were African American, nine percent were Latino, and 3% were another ethnicity [NCES, 2019]. When focusing only on African Americans, 6% of African American public-school principals were men and 5% of African American public-school principals were women (Aldrich, 2019).
Many participants in this study expressed they had other career plans before entering the teaching profession. Participants like Camron, Eugene, Jayce, Gavyn, Bobby, Samuel, Hezekiah, and Manuel all indicated that becoming a teacher was their initial career plan. Lewis was a participant that had plans to become a lawyer but having a passion to want to be a band director led him to the education field. Avery was a participant who worked in a science lab for many years until he decided to make a career switch to the education field. Cullen mentioned his original plans was to become a funeral home director, but because of the impact his high school biology teacher made on him, led him to becoming a teacher. Steven was a participant that indicated he was going to medical school to become an orthopedic surgeon, but his passion to be a high school football coach and respect for his mother who was an educator led him to becoming a teacher. Carlos was a participant that expressed teaching was not his first career choice but had no direction for what he wanted to do for a career, so having friends that were teachers helped recruit him to the teaching profession. Benjamin stated his plan was to become an engineer after graduation, but having so many family members as educators, he decided to follow in their footsteps to become an educator. Fisher was a participant that indicated his career plans included being a chemist in a science lab, but due to the impact his high school biology teacher made on him and an experience he had working with underprivileged children, this led him to the education profession. Terrance was another participant that was unsure of what career path he wanted to take, so he started subbing at schools, which eventually led him to a career in education. Finally, Maddox expressed his career plan was to be a journalist and college professor, but the opportunity to give back to his community where he grew up led him to becoming a teacher.
When analyzing the findings from this study, two of the five findings were findings that I expected to discover. These two findings were low salary, alternative career options, and perceptions of the teaching profession. The second theme was that the praxis exam and certification process is a reason African American males do not enter the education field. Three out of the five findings were something new that I did not expect to discover. These findings were African American males becoming a teacher to be a father figure or role model, African American males feeling like they are forced to be a disciplinarian, and African American males believing they have a role in recruiting more African American males to become teachers.

During this study almost every participant indicated they are a father figure to their students. Participants expressed this responsibility comes internally because they take pride in filling a void that many African American students have. This concept is referred to as cultural taxation, where additional responsibilities are placed upon non-White people because of their ethno-racial backgrounds (Hirshfield, 2010). Next, analyzing African American males express they feel being forced into a disciplinarian was something new I uncovered. Due to me no having those experiences, I thought that was the norm, but after conducting this study I discovered African American male teachers are viewed as someone to be an enforcer. Many participants in this study expressed being forced to be a disciplinarian can lead to feeling overburdened and feeling like the administration doesn’t support them. One participant indicated he is referred to as the “Black boy whisperer” because he feels he is responsible for handling any issues with African American male students. Lastly, African American male teachers believe it is part of their job to recruit more African American males to become teachers. Many participants in this study indicated they try to identify students they feel would be good teachers and try to persuade them to enter the education field. These new findings can be used to add to the literature on why
African American males enter the teaching profession, leave the teaching profession, and how their experiences are in the teaching profession.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The overall intent of this case study was to examine African American male teachers’ career choices and experiences in secondary education settings. More specifically, this study sought to identify what key components attract African American males to become educators, ways to increase their retention rate while guiding more African American males to a teaching career and explore reasons why they avoid becoming teachers. Using critical race theory, anti-deficit achievement theory, and career choice framework, three research questions were created that helped guide the direction of this study to get an understanding of this phenomenon:

1. What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to enter and stay in the teaching profession?

2. What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to disaffiliate from the teaching profession?

3. What do African American male teachers believe about why there is an underrepresentation of African American males in the teaching profession?

The research questions directed the data collection process, which included 17 semistructured interviews. The data collected were analyzed and coded, and five themes emerged. In this chapter, the findings and their connections to theory and literature are discussed. These findings also serve as a basis for further inquiry, as presented via recommendations for further study.

Discussion of Findings

Critical race theory, anti-deficit achievement theory, and career choice framework helped frame this study. Critical race theory is a theory meant to highlight the effects of race on someone’s social standing (Bodenheimer, 2019). Anti-deficit achievement framework concentrates on academic success, precollege success, college achievement, and success after
college (Harper, 2010). Finally, career choice framework believes selecting a career that aligns with a person’s personality is an important step toward career well-being and success, such as job satisfaction (Holland, 1996).

In this section, the five themes outlined in Chapter 4 are discussed in the context of critical race theory, anti-deficit achievement theory, and career choice framework:

1. The impact of a former teacher and the desire to be a role model contributed to African American males’ decision to enter the teaching profession.
2. Low salary, alternative career options, and perceptions of a teaching career were reasons African American males do not choose to enter the teaching profession.
3. The praxis test and the certification process are a hurdle for African American male teachers entering into the teaching profession.
4. African American male teachers attributed being forced into disciplinarian roles and having a lack of administrative support as reasons African American male teachers leave the profession.
5. African American male teachers felt they and the school districts play a role in retention and recruitment.

**Theme 1: The Impact of a Former Teacher and the Desire to be a Role Model Contributed to African American Males’ Decisions to Enter the Teaching Profession**

The first theme that emerged from the data was the impact of a former teacher and the desire to set a good example. This desire was a major reason why African American males decided to enter the classroom. Being a role model and father figure, having an inspiration to become an educator, and making an impact in schools were subthemes that addressed Research Question 1, which asked: What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to enter and stay in the teaching profession? This theme tied to
career choice and anti-deficit framework. The theme tied to career choice because it concentrated on why African American males became teachers, and career choice framework focuses on choosing a career that fits one’s personality to have job satisfaction (Holland, 1996). This theme also tied to anti-deficit achievement framework because it focused on African American males’ success in the teaching profession (Harper 2010, 2012). Almost every participant, I interviewed expressed they feel an extra responsibility to serve as an ethnic representative for African Americans. This responsibility is known as cultural taxation (Hirshfield, 2010). Participants feel they play a vital role in the lives of African American students. Participants believe if they can instill confidence and educate African American students, this will lead them to pursuing post-secondary education and having success.

A role model is someone who serves as an example by influencing others (Merriam-Webster, 2022). A father figure is a person with authority who serves as an emotional alternative for a father (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Nearly every participant in this study expressed they entered the teaching profession to fill these roles. Avery mentioned students coming from broken homes without a father, and he saw that challenge as an opportunity to help his community by stepping into that role as a teacher. Gavin expressed an African American male who leads a classroom environment can compare to an African American father who provides guidance and structure in the home.

Participants noted another reason they became teachers was because of the inspiration they got from someone in their educational journey. Many participants expressed an immediate family member was an educator, who inspired them to pursue a career in education. Some participants mentioned a teacher they had made an impression on them, leading them to become a teacher. One participant in this study indicated an experience he had working with
underprivileged children in a group home sparked his interest in becoming a teacher to help the youth.

Participants also noted they entered the teaching profession because they believed they could make a positive impact. Some participants indicated one way they make a positive impact is by breaking negative stereotypes of African American males. Participants indicated they believed African American students respond better to African American male educators. A few participants stated African American males provide support and discipline for their pupils. Lastly, participants discussed how African American male educators prove that African American students can achieve success in life without going the entertainment, drug, or sports route.

**Theme 2: Low Salary, Alternative Career Options, and Perceptions of a Teaching Career Were Reasons African American Males do not Choose to Enter the Teaching Profession**

The second theme that emerged from the data was low salary, alternative career options, and perceptions of a teaching career as reasons African American males do not become teachers. Low finances and pay scales, other career interests, and perceptions of the teaching profession were subthemes that addressed Research Question 2, which asked: What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to disaffiliate from the teaching profession?

Theme 2 tied to critical race theory because it provided a voice to an underrepresented population in the teaching profession (Delgado et al., 2001). African American male educators expressed better pay could help attract more African American males and help retain current teachers. African American males believed if their plea continues to go unheard, fewer African American males will become teachers.
All participants at some point indicated the low salary is a reason why current African American male teachers either want to move to administration or leave the profession. Participants also noted low salaries deter potential African American males to pursue more lucrative careers. Many participants who had families indicated the low salary can make providing for a family difficult. A few participants indicated they worked multiple jobs to earn more income. Bobby was a participant who expressed that teachers should not work multiple jobs just to make ends meet. Several participants also expressed that due to the low salary, they take on extra responsibilities at school, such as coaching, sponsoring clubs, or after-school tutoring to supplement their income. Lastly, almost all participants indicated that if the pay does not increase, there is going to be an even smaller pool of African American males who choose to become teachers.

Another connection between the literature and the findings related to other career interests. Participants recognized potential African American male educators choose not to become teachers because of other career interests. Some of those careers included engineering, law, professional sports, technology, or social media influencing. Participants said African American males find these careers to be more lucrative, less stressful, and have a more masculine image. Some participants indicated current high school students often earn trades and start their careers earlier. Trades such as auto mechanic, welder, carpentry, and barber school are all popular careers for young African American males to pursue (Monroe et al., 2021). Several participants indicated the teaching profession is not marketed to young African American males the way other careers are, leading to young African American males not having much knowledge of the profession. A few participants mentioned potential African American male teachers do not want to become teachers because they do not want to have to deal with everything a teacher has
to deal with. Steven was a participant who felt when African American males hear third-party horror stories about teaching, it deters them from entering the profession. Participants in this study also felt the teaching profession must be marketed to African American males during high school to create awareness of the profession.

Perceptions of the teaching profession was another subtheme that emerged from participant interviews. The majority of participants indicated that because the teaching profession is dominated by females, it gives the perception that teaching is a job for women. African American males comprise 6–7% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018), whereas African American male teachers only comprise 2% of the teaching force in the United States (NCES, 2013). The perception African American males have of the education field leads to the statistics listed earlier.

Participants expressed that because the percentage of African American male educators is low, when one becomes a teacher, he is automatically assumed to be a disciplinarian. Many participants indicated that just because they are an African American male, they are not a natural disciplinarian. They indicated their purpose was to teach rather than enforcing the rules. Terrance was a participant who believed school district personnel must stop viewing African American males as disciplinarians to recruit more to the profession. A few participants similarly indicated that because the profession is dominated by women, it influences the salary teachers earn.

**Theme 3: The Praxis Test and Certification Process are a Hurdle for African American Male Teachers Entering Into the Teaching Profession**

The third emergent theme was that the praxis test and certification process are hurdles for African American males pursuing teaching careers. The praxis is a required certification exam to become a teacher in a public school (Praxis Exams, 2021). An inspiring teacher must pass three praxis exams to be considered a certified teacher. The first part of the praxis test is the praxis
core test, which focuses on reading, writing, and mathematics. The Praxis 2 test focuses on a specific content, followed by the principals of learning and teaching test (PLT). Also, the certification process was another subtheme that emerged; participants believed the process deters African American males from choosing a career as an educator. Aspects of this theme tied into Research Question 3, which asked: What do African American male teachers believe about why there is an underrepresentation of African American males in the teaching profession? Theme 3 also tied to critical race theory, because African American males believed these standardized exams are culturally biased toward racial minorities.

Participants in this study expressed the praxis exams can discourage many African American males from teaching. Many participants indicated they had to take the test several times before they passed it and thought about going into a different career path. Many participants also indicated they knew several African American men who aspired to become teachers but due to the time, cost, and difficulty of passing the praxis exams, they either took a lesser role in the school system or did not become teachers at all. Many participants felt very strongly about doing away with the praxis exams, because they felt a test does not measure if someone is going to be a good teacher or not. Also, participants expressed the praxis exams are culturally biased, which can lead to racial minorities not performing well on them.

Over half of participants in this study communicated that they became a certified teacher through an alternative certification program. The program the participants went through is known as iTeach. The iTeach alternative teaching program is a private alternative teaching certification program that allows candidates to move at their own pace to become a certified teacher (iTeach.net, 2021). Several participants in this study expressed that because they had difficulty passing the praxis exams while in college, they changed their degree plan to graduate
and enrolled in a master’s program to bypass taking Praxis 1 and enter the alternative teaching program. This route gives candidates extra time to pass Praxis 2 while working toward certification. Some participants said that there should be more than just one route to becoming a certified teacher. Participants believed having different routes of certification and doing away with the praxis exams will help attract more African American males to the teaching profession.

Another subtheme that emerged was the cost of the praxis exams keeps African American males from pursuing teaching. Several participants indicated the cost of the praxis exams prevent African American males from obtaining their professional teaching licenses. The Praxis 1 exam costs $150, the Praxis 2 exam costs $146, and the principles of learning and teaching (PLT) praxis exam costs $146 (ETS, 2021). Participants expressed that the difficulty of passing the exams, the time it takes to study for the exam, and the cost of the exam deters many African American males away. Participants also noted when a person does not pass an exam, they are required to wait 1 month before they can retake the test. Several participants felt this process can cause African American males to give up or look for other career opportunities. Some participants expressed having to pay bills and other living expenses while trying to pay for the exams can put some people in a financial bind. Participants expressed this cost as a reason African American males choose other career options with an easier hiring process.

**Theme 4: African American Male teachers Attributed Being Forced Into Disciplinarian Roles and Having a Lack of Administrative Support as Reasons African American Male Teachers Leave the Profession**

The fourth theme that emerged was African American male teachers attributed being forced into disciplinarian roles and not having support from their administration as reasons African American males leave the education field. African American males in disciplinarian roles and African American males’ lack of support from administration were subthemes that
addressed Research Question 2, which asked: What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to disaffiliate from the teaching profession? This theme related to critical race theory, which views social reality as a product of power (Delgado et al., 2001).

The results of the data collected showed African American males automatically are expected to be a disciplinarian, regardless of their willingness to participate in that role. The findings of this study were similar to previous data that revealed African American males are expected to be enforcers (Brockenbrough, 2015). No matter what subject they teach, African American males are pushed to oversee maintaining order and handling behavioral issues of students (Bryan & Ford, 2014). This dissertation’s findings showed participants felt frustrated and burnt out by having to automatically take on this role.

Almost all participants in this study expressed their frustration in automatically being labeled a disciplinarian. Many participants indicated that schools must stop labeling African American males as disciplinarians. Participants expressed that if you want more African American male educators, allow them to simply teach and not force the disciplinarian role on them. Participants also expressed that discipline is a job for everyone that is at the school and should not fall solely on African American males.

During interviews, multiple participants indicated when they interviewed for teaching jobs, they were asked about coaching a sport and how they handled discipline. One participant expressed these questions caused him to have second thoughts about teaching. Another participant expressed feeling overwhelmed with the burden of having to take on every African American student’s issues. Participants in this study believed that when an African American male is limited to just the disciplinarian role, they are limited in the impact they can have on the
students and school. Lastly, participants indicated that when given the opportunity to move to administration, it was normally to be an assistant principal over discipline. Over half of participants indicated they wanted to move to administration for financial reasons; yet, having to take over discipline deterred them from pursuing the position.

A second subtheme that emerged from the interviews was African American males feeling like they do not have support from administration. Several participants in this study expressed they have a negative relationship with the administration at their schools. Participants indicated not having control over what was taught in their class and how to teach it has had a negative effect on them. For example, Bobby said, “Teachers are really limited on how they can control their classroom and the different curriculums that they have to teach over time leads to African American male teachers feeling not supported.” Participants also expressed having a negative relationship with administration because of large classroom rosters, work during their planning period, and short deadlines to get paperwork turned in with an already busy schedule. In this study, participants indicated when the relationship between the teachers and administration is negative, it creates a negative culture at the school and causes teachers to look for other opportunities.

Theme 5: African American Male Teachers and School Districts’ Roles in Recruitment and Retention

The fifth theme that emerged was African American male teachers and school district personnel contribute to African American male recruitment and retention in the education field. Two subthemes that emerged were (a) African American males encouraging other African American males to become educators, and (b) how school district personnel can recruit and retain African American males. The two subthemes addressed Research Questions 1 and 3, which asked: What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American
male teachers to enter and stay in the teaching profession, and What do African American male teachers believe about why there is an underrepresentation of African American males in the teaching profession? Theme 5 also tied to career choice framework and anti-deficit achievement framework. Career choice framework connected to this theme because career choice framework focuses on a person selecting a career that fits their personality (Holland, 1996). Many participants in this study expressed they wanted to stay in the profession to make an impact. Anti-deficit achievement framework tied to this theme because it focused on the African American males who have stayed in the teaching profession and have recruited more African American males by showing themselves as successful teachers (Harper 2010, 2012).

Several participants suggested current African American male educators must attempt to recruit other African American males to become teachers to increase representation. The participants believed showing themselves having success in the teaching profession could create an opportunity to appeal to more African American males. African American male educators showing themselves having success in the classroom tied into the anti-deficit framework. The anti-deficit framework theory provides a lens that does not focus on failing, but instead focuses on what is right with African American male teachers having success (Harper 2010, 2012).

The majority of participants expressed they wanted to break the negative stereotype of teaching and show that the teaching profession is a rewarding career where a person can make a positive impact on youth and their community. Participants believed if they could dispel negative third-party horror stories about teaching, it could help recruit African American males into the education field. Over half of participants expressed they knew an African American male who was possibly interested in teaching; but because they had heard so many negative comments about teaching, they looked for other career opportunities. Participants also expressed that
teaching profession is a rewarding career where a person can have a positive influence on youth. Participants believed if they could sell African American males on this viewpoint, it would entice them to want to become teachers.

Some participants indicated they try to recruit African American male family members and African American male students to become teachers. Participants who have sons expressed they have tried to recruit their sons to become teachers. They felt if they set a good example and raised them the right way, their sons would choose the teaching profession as a career to help change the culture. Participants without sons indicated they try to target students they see are geared toward helping others, are patient, and are natural leaders. African American male teachers recruiting their African American male students to become teachers ties into a tenet of career choice framework, which focuses on people selecting careers that fit their personality to where they can succeed. The participants in this study indicated it takes a person with patience and a “want to” attitude to become a teacher. This characteristic is another reason why current African American male teachers target certain African American male students to become teachers.

A second subtheme that emerged was how can school district personnel recruit and retain African American male teachers. Participants shared some ideas school district personnel can do to improve representation of African American male teachers and how to retain them. Participants expressed school districts can pay more, show African American male teachers having success teaching, be visible at job fairs in the community and at colleges, and give African American male teachers major roles as teaching leaders. Participants also indicated school district officials need to create programs that target African American male students in high school to expose the education field to them. Participants indicated although recruiting
African American males to the teaching profession is important, it is also just as important to re-recruit the current African American male teachers to keep them from leaving the education field. A few participants mentioned ideas such as supplemental workshops to provide support for teachers in their first few years of teaching.

Implications

This section outlines seven implications, including (a) payment assistance for earning teaching credentials, (b) debt relief from student loans, (c) early recruiting of African American males, (d) partnership with local universities, (e) teacher retention programs for African American male teachers in their first 5 years, (f) the use of financial incentives, and (g) support from administration.

Implication 1: Payment Assistance for Earning Teaching Credentials

School district personnel should consider offering financial assistance to African American males trying to become certified teachers. Several participants in this study indicated they earned their teaching certifications via alternative teaching certification programs. The program used in Louisiana is the iTeach Louisiana alternative certification program, and the total cost of the program is $4,500 (iTeach LA, 2021). School district officials trying to recruit African American males can help cover the cost of certification, especially for those teachers who teach in schools that are not fully staffed or subjects that are difficult to staff. School district personnel could apply for loans or grants to help cover the cost of assisting African American male teachers in their certification process. One grant school district could use is the TEACH Grant, which could cover $4,000 a year for each teacher in the alternative certification program (Student Aid, 2021). School district personnel could also apply for the federal Perkins Loan, which is a low-interest loan made for teachers teaching in a high-need field (Student Aid, 2021).
School district personnel could also partner with universities in the state to provide tuition assistance for teachers trying to earn their teaching credentials. In this program, participants could earn a master’s degree and their teaching certification. School districts should provide financial assistance to help with certification and use this resource as a recruiting tool.

**Implication 2: Debt Relief from Student Loans**

School district personnel should consider addressing the underrepresentation of African American male teachers by providing debt relief to student loans for African American male teachers. Student loan debt is a concern many people face upon college graduation. For African American males, having to pay for college—followed by a low starting salary for teachers—can deter many African American males away from the profession. School district personnel can create requirements for African American male teachers to be eligible for debt relief of student loans. Teachers would have to teach a high-need subject, in a hard-to-staff school, and teach for a minimum of 4 years. In short, school district personnel developing a policy to provide debt relief to student loans for African American males can help with recruitment and retention.

**Implication 3: Early Recruiting of African American Males**

School district personnel should create programs for African American male students in high school to introduce the education field to them. Participants expressed African American male students are exposed to many different careers to in high school, but not the teaching profession. Participants felt recruiting African American males to the teaching profession becomes more difficult after several other careers that may be more lucrative have been exposed to them. Participants indicated creating programs to target African American males in high school is a proactive approach needed to improve African American male teacher representation. One participant had an idea for a program that could help introduce the teaching profession to
African American male high school students. The program would introduce all aspects of the teaching profession to African American male students interested in teaching. Once they have joined the program, the school districts can partner with universities to create a bridge between high school classes and a teaching certificate. Next, those school districts could help with landing African American males with job placement to teach. The overall goal would be to mold African American males into excellent teachers and create a pipeline of African American males to the teaching profession. Creating programs that introduce the teaching profession to African American male high school students and allowing them to earn credits toward a teaching certificate is a way to help increase African American male teachers.

**Implication 4: Partnership with Local Universities**

For schools to improve the representation of African American males in education, they need to partner with the local universities. School district leaders can partner with local universities by recruiting African American males from the different departments, especially those who major in high-demand areas, such as math and science. School district officials should also be visible at career fairs and partner with local universities to create programs for African American high school students to earn credits toward a teaching certification. A few participants in this study indicated they are members of a fraternity. These participants expressed school districts need to recruit members of these fraternities to become teachers, as there is a large amount of African American males who are members in them. With so many members in different fraternities, there is a large network to recruit from. Many members in these fraternities can positively influence African American students and bring an abundance of information to the classroom. Also, these fraternities have a large presence in the community with community service, so they can provide role models the young African American males can look up too.
When it comes to partnering with local universities, school districts should target HBCUs for recruiting. School district personnel who work with their local university and recruit African American males from fraternities can help improve representation of African American males in the education field.

**Implication 5: Create Teacher Retention Programs for African American Males**

School district personnel should create teacher retention programs for African American male teachers in their first 5 years of teaching. Approximately 50% of new teachers leave the profession in their first 5 years of teaching (National Education Association, 2021). This high turnover rate causes school officials to spend time, money, and other resources to recruit more teachers. Developing a program that aims at retaining current African American male teachers can help school districts save resources and time rather than having to always try to replace African American males leaving the profession. This program would include mentoring and induction, supporting African American male teacher well-being, promoting teacher engagement, and creating a supportive school climate. School district personnel can work closely with new African American male teachers to make sure they receive the support they need to keep them from wanting to leave the profession. Some participants noted being a first year teacher is very tough on new teachers and without support or someone to provide help, it can become very overwhelming. If school district personnel create a program to assist African American males, this initiative could help retain them and serve as a recruiting tool.

In this program, the first step would be to provide African American males with a mentoring and induction program. African American males would be paired with an experienced teacher to help provide guidance and support. Next, the program can support African American male teacher well-being. School leaders can develop strategies for peer support and mentorship,
and create a culture that includes fair leave policies, a safe environment, and resources to be successful at their job. The third part of the program would entail promoting teacher engagement. School officials can value African American males’ contribution to the school and have them take a part of decisions that impact school operations. School officials can also partner an African American male student teacher with a current African American male teacher to help with retention. The final part of the program would comprise school leaders creating a supportive school climate. Many participants indicated not having authority over what they teach nor how they teach, poor working conditions, and not having a say in important decisions as reasons they would leave the teaching profession. Creating a teacher retention program for African American males in their first 5 years of teaching is vital to retaining African American males.

**Implication 6: Use of Financial Incentives**

School district personnel should increase the base salary and have other financial incentives to recruit more African American males to become teachers. To improve African American male teacher recruitment and retention, school district personnel can provide bonuses to teachers in difficult-to-staff schools or subjects. Participants in this study advocated for increased salary and incentives. They noted a major factor on why they would leave the profession was due to financial reasons. Participants emphasized they enjoyed teaching but taking care of a family was difficult with the low pay. Several participants indicated they have taken on extra roles at work or work a second job to supplement their income. Adding financial incentives for African American male teachers in hard-to-staff subjects or schools can help with recruitment. Furthermore, providing African American male teachers with retention bonuses for staying a certain number of years is a way to help retain African American males.
Implication 7: Support from Administration

School district personnel should create professional development opportunities for school administrators to provide better support for African American males. Over half of participants indicated they felt a lack of support and had a negative relationship with their administration. For example, participants indicated having large classroom rosters, extra work to complete during their planning period, and short deadlines to get paperwork turned in creates a negative work environment when the administration is not supportive. Also, participants in this study indicated not having input on what is taught in their classes and how information is taught is a reason African American males feel unsupported from the administration.

Providing professional development opportunities for school administrators to provide support for African American males is a step in the right direction to making them feel supported. In these professional development initiatives, administrators can learn to provide teachers with strategies to reduce stress to increase teacher and student performance. Next, administrators can learn to give teachers time to get task done. Administrators can eliminate redundant tasks and low-leverage tasks and provide ample time for tasks that are important. Administrators can also learn to create a solid plan for school discipline. To support African American males, school administrators need to have clear expectations of behavior and provide teachers with strategies they can use to improve student behaviors. Lastly, administrators can learn how to support African American male teachers with parents. African American male teachers can make mistakes but having the support of the administration can go a long way in boosting teacher morale. Creating professional development opportunities for administration to provide support for African American male teachers can help with retention.
Limitations of the Study

Certain limitations were identified throughout the research process, including: (a) the focus only on secondary grade level teachers, (b) time and skill of the researcher, (c) the study’s location and time, and (d) the COVID-19 global pandemic.

This study was limited by the narrow focus on secondary grade level African American male teachers. By focusing only on secondary grade level teachers, the voices of African American males at the elementary level were subsequently excluded. Out of the 239,460 African American teachers, only 23.5% are males (NCES, 2020). These numbers showed only 2% of the teaching force are African American male. The number of African American male elementary teachers is less than 2%. By not including that population in this study, it was impossible to gain insight into their experiences, why they chose to teach on the elementary level, and ways to recruit and retain African American males at the elementary school level.

Another limitation of this study was the skill level of the researcher and time provided to conduct high quality research. The time available to conduct a high-quality case study can limit the depth of data collected (Merriam, 2009). The skill level of the researcher conducting the study may limit the quality of the research and data collected (Merriam, 2009). The sample size the researcher used was data saturation.

The third limitation was the study’s location or setting. All participants worked at schools in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana metropolitan area. The researcher was interested in understanding the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of African American male teachers and their career choices and experiences in secondary grade settings. The setting may limit findings to be generalized to other populations and geographical locations.
The final limitation of this study was participant recruitment, selection, and interviews occurred during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Many school districts in the United States shifted to virtual learning in March 2020 and either remained virtual for the remainder of the year or operated with a hybrid model, where some students would come to school while others would take virtual classes at home. This shift placed a lot of extra work and stress on teachers everywhere. Participants were interviewed in Summer 2021, and all 17 participants mentioned the effects the COVID-19 global pandemic had on them. Due to COVID-19, going to different schools to recruit participants became difficult because of all the restrictions and the exhaustion of many African American male teachers. The COVID-19 global pandemic made a few participants hesitant to conduct the interview in person, so they elected to participate in the study via zoom.

**Future Research**

The key findings of this study prompted several possible future research ideas, including:

(a) exploring the experiences of African American male teachers who have left the teaching profession, (b) replicating the study to collect data in different geographical regions and across different grade levels, (c) examining school districts’ policies and procedures concerning the recruitment of African American males, (d) determining how school districts can increase involvement of African American males in their teacher education programs, and (e) examining the pressure African American male teachers face.

First, future researchers could investigate the experiences of African American males who have left the education field. Gaining insight into why African American males left the education field would provide researchers an opportunity to learn what caused them to leave and what could have been done to keep them in the profession. Future research could also explore the
recruitment and retention of African American males, because there remains a lack of research in that area.

Second, future researchers could investigate replicating the study to collect data in different geographical regions and different grade levels. Future research could expand the sample size and include African American male teachers in other geographical areas. Considering African American male teachers from other geographical areas, provides researchers an opportunity to see if similar results are obtained. This study had 17 participants who all taught in public schools. Future research could expand to collecting data from African American males in private and charter schools to compare their experiences. Future researchers should also look at interviewing retired African American male teachers. Those two groups could potentially provide more data to analyze and develop better ways to recruit and retain African American male teachers. Lastly, future researchers could investigate interviewing African American male teachers at the elementary level to gain insight into their experiences and determine why they chose to teach at that grade level.

Third, future researchers could examine school districts’ policies and procedures concerning the recruitment of African American males. Future research studies should explore how school district personnel can improve their policies and procedures for recruiting African American males. By improving recruitment and retention tactics for African American males, students from all backgrounds benefit, and school district officials could spend less time and money on having to try and constantly recruit African American males.

Fourth, future researchers could examine how school district personnel can increase African American male teacher involvement in their education programs. While conducting this study, some participants indicated they do not have input on what is taught in their classroom
and how they can teach the information. One participant indicated when college students student teach, African American male teachers are often not selected to be a mentor teacher. Future researchers could examine the effects of involving African American male teachers in the decision-making processes of curriculum and teacher education programs.

Fifth, future research could examine the pressure African American male teachers face in the teaching profession. During this study, participants expressed they feel an extra responsibility internally to do an exceptional job as a teacher. One participant mentioned he is referred to as the “Black boy whisperer”, where he deals with any issues dealing with African American students. African American male teachers believe to increase the percentage of African American male teachers, school district personnel have to stop adding extra responsibilities to African American males because of their ethnicity. Future research could examine the effects of having an extra responsibility to do an exceptional job as an African American male teacher has on African American males leaving the teaching profession.

**Researcher’s Reflection**

As the researcher who is an African American male teacher, there were findings that I expected to uncover when conducting this study. I expected participants to express low salary as a reason African American males do not enter the teaching profession and the praxis exam and certification process keeping African American males from becoming teachers. However, I was able to discover some findings that I did not expect. I was surprised with three out of the five findings. Those findings were African American male teachers being forced into disciplinarian roles and having a lack of administrative support, African American male teachers entering the profession to be a father figure or role model, and African American male teachers believing themselves and school district personnel have a role in recruitment and retention of all African
American male teachers. The following paragraph goes in depth into the new findings I was surprised to discover in this study.

As an African American male who teaches at a predominantly White private high school, I have not been faced with feeling like have to be a disciplinarian or have a lack of support from my administration. Several participants mentioned they feel this pressure because they are an African American male, and they are automatically are placed in a disciplinarian role. Being placed in a disciplinarian role even when they do not want to take on that responsibility makes many of the participants feel like the administration does not value or support them. For my participants that teach at predominantly White high schools, they expressed they do not feel they are expected to be disciplinarians, but they do feel a responsibility to provide support for African American students. Next, I was surprised to discover many African American males become teachers to be a role model to students. Participants in this study indicated they take great pride in being that role model or father figure students need when they lack that person at home. I was surprised that African American male teachers entered the profession to be a role model because I didn’t think that they felt students would look up to them as they would African American males in other professions. Lastly, I had not that about the fact that African American male teachers believe they have a role in recruitment and retention of African American males in the education field. When conducting this study, I did not put much thought into African American males recruiting more African American males into the education field. After collecting data for this study, I discovered that many African American male educators feel it is part of their job to attract more African American males to the education field. Following the interviews and discovering African American male teachers believe they have a role in recruiting more African American males to teach, I now view that as part of my responsibility to identify African
American men who can help boost the teaching profession. After reflecting on this finding, I now feel a deeper sense of responsibility in helping recruit and retain other African American male educators.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the career choices and experiences of African American male educators in secondary grade settings. The core reason African American male teachers were targeted for this study is because only 8–10% of teachers are non-White in the United States, whereas over one third of the students are African American (Schaeffer, 2021). The student demographics in public schools have become more diverse, but unfortunately the teacher workforce has not followed the same trend. The teaching profession is still predominantly White and female. This demographic imbalance is a reason to recruit more African American males to the teaching profession. Still, recruiting African American males to the teaching profession has proved difficult, because African American male high school and college students regard teaching as a low salaried and unpopular career. Moreover, this research study sought to widen the understanding around the need for African American males in secondary level schools, the key factors related to their underrepresentation, and the reasons they stay in the teaching profession.

This dissertation explored what attracts African American male teachers to the teaching profession, what keeps them in the profession, and what strategies can be employed to recruit more African American males to the teaching profession through. Such exploration was conducted using a critical race theory, anti-deficit achievement framework, and career choice framework. Second, this dissertation identified policy and practice implications for recruiting
and retaining African American male teachers. This dissertation had three research questions that focused on the following:

1. What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to enter and stay in the teaching profession?
2. What conditions or circumstances contributed to the decision of African American male teachers to disaffiliate from the teaching profession?
3. What do African American male teachers believe about why there is an underrepresentation of African American males in the teaching profession?

Seventeen semistructured interviews were conducted to answer those three research questions. Participants indicated they pursued a teaching career to be a role model or father figure to students. They also indicated an immediate family member, former teacher, or an experience they had led them into the teaching profession. Several participants indicated they became teachers because of the positive impact they can make on all students. During interviews, participants expressed reasons why African American males choose other career options. Those reasons included low salary, other career interests, and the perception of the teaching profession. Also, participants expressed the difficulty of passing the praxis exam and the cost of the praxis exams as reasons being the small percentage of African American male teachers. Some participants indicated that automatically being labeled as a disciplinarian and not having support from administration causes African American males to want to leave the profession. Lastly, participants expressed current African American male teachers and school district personnel have a role in recruiting more African American males to become teachers and retaining them once they enter the profession.
This dissertation outlined several policy and practice implications for school district personnel to recruit and retain African American male teachers. Findings include two policy implications: iTeach Louisiana payment assistance and debt relief from student loans. This dissertation also outlined five practice implications: (a) early recruiting of African American males, (b) creating a partnership with local universities, (c) creating teacher retention programs for African American male teachers in their first 5 years, (d) increased salary for teachers, and (e) support from administration. This dissertation added to existing literature of understanding the need for African American male teachers in secondary level public schools by examining why they entered and stayed in the teaching profession, the variables related to their underrepresentation, and strategies to recruit and retain more African American males in the education field.

To get more African American males in the education field, the profession has to be exposed earlier to African American males, the pay had to increase, school districts can assist with job placement, provide support and opportunities to be successful, and build a pipeline with HBCUs. The first step to improving the percentage of African American males in education would be to expose the profession earlier to African American men. School district personnel could have career fairs and teacher shadow opportunities that allows young African American males to gain information about the teaching profession and see what a teacher goes through on a day-to-day basis. Next, school districts can increase the salary. Making the teaching profession salary more competitive with other professions can entice more African American males to look into becoming educators. The third step to help increase the percentage of African American males teaching is school districts can assist with job placement. When an African American male graduates from college and entering the teaching profession, his home school district can assist
with job placement. The fourth way to get more African American males in the education field is providing them with support and the resources to be successful. When an African American male is a new teacher, he can be partnered with a veteran teacher to provide guidance and support. Also, schools can make sure that when they recruit an African American male teacher, he is placed in a class that he is comfortable teaching and given resources to be successful. Lastly, school district personnel can build a pipeline with HBCUs to recruit more African American males. About 12.9% of African American undergraduate students are enrolled in HBCUs (McClain & Perry, 2017), whereas only around 12.9% of the total African American undergraduate population is at a HBCU, and HBCUs graduate approximately 21.5% of all African American undergraduates. There is 53% of African American undergraduates enrolled at PWIs graduating at a rate less than their peers attending HBCUs (Lake, 2021). This is why it is important that school districts start their recruiting efforts at HBCUs to get more African American male educators.

Recent data suggest new classroom teachers are more diverse than the current teacher workforce. In 2019, African American teachers accounted for 11% of all newly hired teachers (ed.gov, 2020). Although these metrics are optimistic, African American males still leave the profession in large numbers. There were 4% fewer African American teachers in public schools in 2012 than there were in 2008, largely due to teacher turnover and African American males pursuing other career opportunities (Hanford, 2017).
APPENDIX A. STUDY INVITATION

Dear ________________: 

My name is Anthony Graham Jr., and I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled “The underrepresentation of African American male secondary educators in public schools.” So, you know, this is being conducted in partial fulfillment of a PhD in Educational Leadership and Research at Louisiana State University. I am the student investigator in this study (XXX-XXX-XXXX), xxxxx@lsu.edu). My doctoral committee chair, principal investigator and supervising professor is Dr. Ashley Clayton (xxxxx@lsu.edu).

You are being invited to volunteer as a participant because you are an African American male teacher in secondary education in a public school. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have. If you agree to participate in this study, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your name and school will not appear in the study.

Each respondent’s transcripts will be electronically filed and will be password-protected. Responses will also be printed and stored in a locked cabinet. Upon completion of the study, the researcher will make all results and findings available to participants. This researcher will audio record interviews and the recording will be destroyed after being transcribed. In the published reports, there will not be any information provided which would assist in identifying any participants.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please fill out the following survey:

[Survey link redacted]

Thank you for considering possible participation in this study.

Anthony W. Graham Jr.
PhD Candidate, Educational Leadership and Research
Louisiana State University
xxxxx@lsu.edu
APPENDIX B. ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

Study Title: A Case Study of the Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators’ Career Choices and Experiences in Secondary Public Schools

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this case study is to examine the career choices and experiences of African American male teachers in secondary grade settings. This study is looking to find what attracts African American males to the teaching profession, what keeps them in the teaching profession, and what are ways we can recruit more African American males to the teaching profession. This study will focus on African American males who teach core subjects on the secondary level. The recruitment email will be sent out to the public schools and district officials who will grant permission to recruit potential participants. Next, they will forward the recruitment email with the Qualtrics survey attached to potential participants to see if they would be interested in being a part of the study. Before participating in this study, each participant will complete a Qualtrics survey to ensure they meet the criteria for the study. In the Qualtrics survey potential participants will make sure they meet the criteria for the study and provide name and contact information. Each participant will take part in a 40-80 minute interview with the researcher utilizing a semistructured interview protocol. Each interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. In the event that the interview cannot take place in person, participants may participate in a web-based interview (e.g. Zoom, Google Hangouts, FaceTime).

Risks: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. Participants may experience some discomfort in discussing their experiences as a public school teacher, but no physical or psychological harm should result from these discussions. Participants are not required to answer any question with which they feel uncomfortable.

Benefits: Participants will be given a $20 visa gift card for participating in the study. Additionally, the results from this study will inform school districts, education policymakers, and other officials on why African American males chose the education profession and ways to recruit and retain African American males in the teaching profession.

Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study:
Anthony W. Graham Jr, Doctoral Student, Louisiana State University, xxxxx@lsu.edu, XXX-XXX-XXXX
Dr. Ashley B. Clayton, Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University, xxxxx@lsu.edu, XXX-XXX-XXXX

Performance Sites: Public middle and high schools in Louisiana

Number of Subjects: 25
Subject Inclusion

Subjects in this study must 1) identify as an African American male, 2) teach a core subject, 3) teach in a public school, 4) have two or more years of teaching experience, and 5) be 18 years or older. Populations excluded are those who do not identify as African American male, teach in private or charter schools, does not teach a core subject, have fewer than two years of teaching experience, and those who are minors (under the age of 18).

Right to Refuse

Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Privacy

Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Signatures

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. For injury or illness, call your physician, or the Student Health Center if you are an LSU student. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns, I can contact Alex Cohen, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, or www.lsu.edu/research. I will allow teachers to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator’s obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

School Administrator Signature: ____________________________ Date: ________
APPENDIX C. PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

A Case Study of the Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators’ Career Choices and Experiences in Secondary Public Schools

You are invited to participate in a research study that is looking at gaining an understanding on the underrepresentation of African American male educators’ career choices and experiences in secondary public schools. In particular, we are looking to hear from African American male educators who are core subject teachers (Math, Science, History, English), and have a minimum of 2 years teaching experience. If you qualify for the study and are selected, you will be invited to take part in a 40-80 minute interview with the primary research team. The interview will take place on campus in a private room, or in a web-based format (e.g. Zoom, Google Hangouts, FaceTime). Each interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Please note: not all qualified participants will be selected to participate in the study due to time and resource constraints.

Participants will receive a $20 visa gift card for participating in the study.

Participation in this study is voluntary and confidential, and at no point will your name appear in any publication. Participants have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate, or to stop participating at any time without penalty. Participants will be asked to sign a consent form prior to participation in the study.

Investigators
The following investigators are available for questions about this study:
Anthony W. Graham Jr., Louisiana State University, xxxxx@lsu.edu
Dr. Ashley B. Clayton, Louisiana State University, xxxxx@lsu.edu

Are you interested in participating in this research study?
  o Yes
  o No
Please enter your first name and last name in the form below.
- First Name ________________________________
- Last Name ________________________________

What is your gender?
- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/ third gender
- Prefer to self-describe
- Prefer not to answer

Do you have at least two or more years of teaching experience?
- Yes
- No

How many years of teaching experience do you have?
_________________________________________________________________

What is the best email address to reach you?
_________________________________________________________________

What is the best phone number to reach you?
_________________________________________________________________

Do you identify as African American?
- Yes
- No
Do you teach a core subject?
  o Yes
  o No

What is the subject that you teach?
________________________________________________________________

Page Break

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. If you qualify, the researcher will reach out to schedule an interview with you.
APPENDIX D. CONSENT FORM

Study Title: A Case Study of the Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators’ Career Choices and Experiences in Secondary Public Schools

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this case study is to examine the career choices and experiences of African American male teachers in secondary grade settings. This study is looking to find what attracts African American males to the teaching profession, what keeps them in the teaching profession, and what are ways we can recruit more African American males to the teaching profession. This study will focus on African American males who teach core subjects on the secondary level. Before participating in this study, each participant will complete a Qualtrics survey to ensure they meet the criteria for the study. Each participant will take part in a 40-80 minute interview with the researcher utilizing a semistructured interview protocol. Each interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. In the event that the interview cannot take place in person, participants may participate in a web-based interview (e.g. Zoom, Google Hangouts, FaceTime).

Risks: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. Participants may experience some discomfort in discussing their experiences as a public school teacher, but no physical or psychological harm should result from these discussions. Participants are not required to answer any question with which they feel uncomfortable.

Benefits: Participants will be given a $20 visa gift card for participating in the study. Additionally, the results from this study will inform school districts, education policymakers, and other officials on why African American males chose the education profession and ways to recruit and retain African American males in the teaching profession.

Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study: Anthony W. Graham Jr, Doctoral Student, Louisiana State University, xxxxx@lsu.edu, XXX-XXX-XXXX

Dr. Ashley B. Clayton, Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University, xxxxx@lsu.edu, XXX-XXX-XXXX

Performance Sites: Public middle and high schools in Louisiana

Number of Subjects: 25
**Subject Inclusion**

Subjects in this study must 1) identify as an African American male, 2) teach a core subject 3) teach in a public school, 4) have 2 or more years of teaching experience, and 5) be 18 years or older. Populations excluded are those who do not identify as African American male, teach in private or charter schools, does not teach a core subject, have fewer than 2 years of teaching experience, and those who are minors (under the age of 18).

**Right to Refuse**

Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

**Privacy**

Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

**Signatures**

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. For injury or illness, call your physician, or the Student Health Center if you are an LSU student. If I have questions about subject's rights or other concerns, I can contact Alex Cohen, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, or www.lsu.edu/research.

I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

**Subject Signature:** ________________________________  **Date:** ________________

The study subject has indicated to me that he is unable to read. I certify that I have read this consent form to the subject and explained that by completing the signature line above, the subject has agreed to participate.

**Signature of Reader:** ________________________________  **Date:** ________________
APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Time of interview:
Date of interview:
Location:
Interviewer:
Participant Pseudonym:
Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. I would like to record the interview so the study can be as accurate as possible. You may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any point of the interview.

Interview Questions:

1. What subjects/grade level do you teach?
2. Where and when did you obtain your degree(s)?
3. How many years have you been in the teaching profession?
4. To what extent was your educational/preparation effective in preparing you to become a teacher?
5. Do you feel the difficulty passing the praxis exams is a reason that many African American males choose not to enter the teaching profession? Why or why not?
6. In your PK–12 education experience, did you have any African American male educators? If so, how many?
7. Do you feel that if African American males have a negative experience during their time in grade school, it deters them from pursuing a career as an educator on the secondary level?
8. What role do you believe job satisfaction has in African American males remaining in the teaching profession?
9. As an African American male teacher, has your experience in the classroom made you want to remain teaching in the classroom, move to administration, or leave the teaching field all together?
10. Do you believe there is a need for African American male teachers in secondary education in public schools? Why or why not?
11. As an African American male educator, what role does finances play in attracting African American males to the teaching profession?
12. Would you or have you encouraged African American males to enter the field of education as a profession/career? If not, why? If so, how?
13. What or who inspired you to become an educator on the secondary level?
14. What reasons would you attribute to the current underrepresentation of African American male teachers in secondary education at public schools?
15. What type of impact, if any, do you think African American male educators have on students in secondary public-school settings?
16. What can be done to increase the representation of African American male educators teaching core subjects on the secondary level?
17. What can school districts do to recruit and retain African American male educators on the secondary level?
18. Do you believe that the opportunity to supplement your income with stipends on the secondary level plays a role in African American males choosing to enter the profession?
19. Do you feel that since so many teachers are female, and the teaching profession has a feminine image, that turns African American males away from wanting to become teachers?
20. What role does African American males wanting to move up into administration play in the lack of African American teachers teaching core subjects?
21. Is there anything else you would like to add?
APPENDIX F. IRB PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project: A Case Study of the Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators’ Career Choices and Experiences in Secondary Public Schools

Investigators:
Anthony W. Graham Jr. Doctoral Student, Louisiana State University
Dr. Ashley B. Clayton, Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University

Project Abstract

The purpose of this case study is to examine the career choices and experiences of African American male teachers in secondary public school grade settings. This study is looking to find what attracts African American males to the teaching profession, what keeps them in the profession, and what are ways we can recruit more African American males to the teaching profession. This study will focus on African American males who teach core subjects on the secondary level.

Study Procedures

The researcher will partner with staff at several different school districts in south Louisiana to recruit study participants. The recruitment email (attached) will be sent out to school districts. Potential participants will indicate their interest in participating in the study by completing a Qualtrics form (attached) to get their basic demographic information and to verify that they meet the subject inclusion criteria. Subjects in this study must 1) identify as an African American male, 2) teach a core subject 3) teach in a public school, 4) have 2 or more years of teaching experience, and 5) be 18 years or older. Populations excluded are those who do not identify as African American male, teach in private or charter schools, does not teach a core subject, have fewer than 2 years of teaching experience, and those who are minors (under the age of 18).

Participants will be required to sign a consent form prior to participating in interviews and will receive a $20 visa gift card for participating. Each participant will take part in a 40-80 minute interview with the researcher utilizing a semistructured interview protocol (see attached). The interviews will take place based on the participant’s availability. Interviews will take place in a private office/room at the participant’s school or conference room located at Louisiana State University. Each interview will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. In the event that the interview cannot take place in person, participants may participate in a web-based interview (e.g. Zoom, Google Hangouts, FaceTime). In addition, to recruiting participants directly from the Qualtrics form, the researchers will utilize snowball-sampling techniques. This will allow the researchers to ask participants if they can recommend a peer that may qualify to participate in the study.
Hard copies of the signed consent forms will be stored in a locked file box in the Principal Investigator’s home office. Any consent forms that were sent via email from subjects who participated virtually (e.g. Zoom) will be immediately printed and stored in a locked file box in the home office. Interview audio files, transcripts, participant pseudonyms and demographic information, and subsequent data analysis will be shared among the research team in a password-protected OneDrive folder. A file with the participants’ names and the new identifier (pseudonym) associated with them will be stored separately from all data on the researchers’ password-protected computers.
APPENDIX G. FINAL CODEBOOK

Career background and motivations
- Grade level taught
- Inspiration to become an educator
- Move to administration
- Stipends/Access to increased funding based on school level
- Subjects taught
- Years of teaching experience

Educational Background
- Alternative Teaching Certification
- College Attended
- Educational preparation for a teacher
- Graduate degrees
- Undergraduate degree/major

Expectations of Black male teachers
- Disciplinarian Role
- Impact of African American male teachers
- Role Model/Father figure

Experiences as Black men in teaching
- African American males’ classroom experience
- Appreciation to share their lived experiences
- Exposure to Black male teachers in core subjects
- Job satisfaction of African American males

Participants’ role in recruitment and retention
- Encouraged African American males to become educators
- How to increase representation of African American males in secondary public schools

Challenges to recruitment and retention
- Dissatisfaction with teaching
- Feminine image
- Finances/Pay Scale
- Lack of respect for teaching profession
- Lack of support from admin
- Other Career Interests
- Personal negative experiences in secondary school as an African American male

Institutional/ K–12 Leadership Role in Recruitment
- How can school districts recruit and retain African American males?
Reasons for underrepresentation of African American male teachers

- The need for African American males in secondary public schools
- Difficulty of passing the praxis exams

Great Quotes
Additional Comments
APPENDIX H. IRB APPROVAL

TO: Clayton, Ashley
LSUAM | Col of HSE | Education

FROM: Paul Mooney
Associate Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: 29-Apr-2021
RE: IRBAM-21-0500
TITLE: A Case Study of the Underrepresentation of African American Male Educators' Career Choices and Experiences in Secondary Public Schools

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial Application
Review Type: Exempt
Risk Factor: Minimal
Review Date: 29-Apr-2021
Status: Approved
Approval Date: 29-Apr-2021
Approval Expiration Date: 28-Apr-2024
Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)
Number of subjects approved: 25

LSU Proposal Number:

By: Paul Mooney, Associate Chair

Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins), notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS 45 CFR 46 and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/research

Louisiana State University  O 225-578-5833
131 David Boyd Hall  F 225-578-5983
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  http://www.lsu.edu/research

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### APPENDIX I. INITIAL CODEBOOK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Code Concepts</th>
<th>Codes/ (Code Instances)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Impact of a Former Teacher and the Desire to be a Role Model Contributed to African American Males’ Decisions to Enter the Teaching Profession</td>
<td>Career background and motivations, Educational Background, Great Quotes, Additional Comments</td>
<td>Grade level taught (18), Inspiration to become an educator (20), Move to administration (31), Stipends/Access to increased funding based on school level (22), Subjects taught (19), Years of teaching experience (18), Alternative Teaching Certification (14), College Attended (22), Educational preparation for a teacher (18), Graduate degrees (12), Undergraduate degree/major (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low salary, alternative career options, and perceptions of a teaching career are reasons African American males do not choose to enter the teaching profession.</td>
<td>Challenges to recruitment and retention</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with teaching (10), Feminine image (27), Finances/Pay Scale (73), Lack of respect for teaching profession (4), Lack of support from admin (3), Other Career Interests (5), Personal negative experiences in secondary school as an African American male (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The praxis test and the certification process are hurdles for African American male teachers entering into the teaching profession.</td>
<td>Challenges to recruitment and retention, Reasons for underrepresentation of African American male teachers</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with teaching (10), Feminine image (27), Finances/Pay Scale (73), Lack of respect for teaching profession (4), Lack of support from admin (3), Other Career Interests (5), Personal negative experiences in secondary school as an African American male (20), The need for African American males in secondary public schools (39), Difficulty of passing the praxis exams (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American male teachers attributed being forced into disciplinarian roles</td>
<td>Expectations of Black male teachers</td>
<td>Disciplinarian Role (17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and having a lack of administrative support as reasons African American male teachers are leaving the profession.

| Experiences as Black men in teaching | • Impact of African American male teachers (50)  
• Role Model/Father figure (42)  
• African American males’ classroom experience (36)  
• Appreciation to share their lived experiences (16)  
• Exposure to Black male teachers in core subjects (27)  
• Job satisfaction of African American males (22) |

African American male teachers felt they and their school districts play a role in retention and recruitment.

| Participants’ role in recruitment and retention  
Institutional/ K–12 Leadership Role in Recruitment | • Encouraged African American males to become educators (18)  
• How to increase representation of African American males in secondary public schools (31)  
• How can school districts recruit and retain African American males (23)? |
REFERENCES


*Davis v. East Baton Rouge Parish School Bd.*, 721 F.2d 1425 (5th Cir. 1983).


Schaeffer, K., (2021) *America’s public school teachers are far less racially and ethnically diverse than their students.* Pew Research Center.


VITA

Anthony W. Graham, Jr. (he/him/his) earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff in Pine Bluff, Arkansas in 2013. He received his Master of Science degree in Biology from Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi in 2015.

Anthony joined the City of Baker school system in August 2015 as a high school biology teacher, assistant football coach, and head track coach. In this role, Anthony prepared and delivered engaging Biology lessons to students, monitored student performances, and set up exams, assessments, and experiments in accordance with curriculum requirements and standards of the state and district. Anthony joined the staff at Catholic High School of Baton Rouge as a high school biology teacher and assistant football coach having the same duties as his previous school.

Anthony was accepted into LSU’s educational leadership program within the College of Human Sciences and Education in Fall 2017. He began coursework for the Doctor of Philosophy degree for educational leadership in August 2017.

As a scholar–practitioner in PK–12 educational leadership, Anthony has extensive experience in teaching academic lessons that students will need to attend college and to enter the job market, assess students’ abilities, strengths, and weakness, communicate with parents about students’ progress, and supervise or assist students with activities outside of school.