

LEARNING THROUGH LISTENING: AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE TEACHERS AND  
THEIR EDUCATION AND TEACHER CAREER EXPERIENCES

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

Currently there is a shortage of teachers across the United States and the shortage for racially diverse teachers, particularly African American males, is continuing to decrease. This lack of representation of the African American male teacher population has implications for educational institutions. All students, teachers, staff, and administrators benefit from having African American male teachers in their schools. They are able to address cultural, educational, and social issues as it relates to their specific racial and gender background. All are able to learn and experience different perspectives and ways of understanding when diverse teacher populations exist in the schools. The African American male students particularly are able to have a representative of their racial and gender background that is often not represented in the teaching field. Recruiting and retaining African American male teachers is important for the future of education and it is particularly important for the African American male students. If these students are not experiencing someone that looks like them in this profession they may decide not to enter or question their worth as future educators. Educational stakeholders have to be specific in their strategies to diversify the teacher workforce and ensure that everyone is represented and appreciated in this space.

This dissertation investigated the lived experiences of African American male teachers in Eythlyen, which influenced their decision to enter and remain in the teaching field. Eythlyen is a pseudonym for the Midwest inner city studied; its public schools are heavily populated by students of color, yet the teachers' racial makeup does not equal that of the students. Using Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) as a theoretical framework, this phenomenological study includes motivations that African American males had for entering the teaching profession,

significant factors during their teaching that made them want to continue on in the career, and it addressed the barriers that make them question their role and future in teaching.

This study includes seven African American male teachers. All of the participants are currently teaching in different traditional public schools and charter schools in Eythlyen. Most of the participants have experience teaching in multiple grade levels and multiple schools in Eythlyen. Specifically, the African American male teachers explained themes around: (1) the barriers of African American male teachers; (2) African American male teachers and their persistence in the teaching field; (3) the role of mentorship and African American male presence; and (4) strategic recruitment and retention necessary to attract and keep African American male teachers. The themes presented topics, such as African American male teachers having to prove themselves, subjective evaluation systems, culture differences, stereotypes, being there for Black boys, and K-12 education experiences, amongst others. The research findings benefit educational stakeholders at the national, state, and local levels as they consider recruitment of African American males and retention strategies to address the needs of African American public school teachers.

*Keywords:* Social Cognitive Career Theory, African American, teachers, retention, recruitment, teacher shortage

*Dedicated to my late grandfather, Brodie Davis*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

African American males are represented at an extremely low rate in the teaching profession across the United States. There is a need to inform all about the necessity to recruit, retain, and prepare African American males for the teaching profession. In order to do so one must understand the life experiences of current African American males in the field to gain a sense of what led them into teaching and helped them remain in the field. Students sometimes experience limited exposure to teachers of color and diverse experiences in their schools, because the profession is majority white and female dominated. Society, family, friends, and educational institutions all play somewhat of a role in influencing the career choice of males and females, as well as perceived appropriate roles for particular races or cultures. These pressures, along with a host of other reasons, may keep African American males from deciding to teach. Through the use of Social Cognitive Career Theory and the capturing of African American male teachers' stories it can help all begin to understand what is occurring within this African American male teacher shortage phenomenon.

I became interested in this phenomenon as I engaged in an interview with my grandfather. He is a recently retired middle school history teacher. As part of a class assignment I was asked to conduct an oral history interview. While interviewing my grandfather I learned a lot of information that I had not previously thought about as it relates to education and the racial makeup of teachers in public schools. We had a discussion regarding the lack of teachers of color in the teaching profession and he expressed how he was usually one of a few teachers of color and majority of the time the only African American male teacher. I began to think how this shortage of teachers of color was representative of many U.S. public schools. As I began to conduct research on the issue, I noticed how the racial makeup of teachers and administrators is

not representative of the students they teach, particularly in urban inner cities which have high representations of students of color. There are some educational initiatives in place to recruit African American males into the teaching field, yet more research is needed as the number is still significantly low.

Teachers are not only teaching, but many times they serve as mentors to the youth in their community and engage in many other significant roles. Whether students lack direction at home, understanding of other cultures, or just need a role model, they sometimes look up to their teachers and coaches for this. As I mentioned, diversifying the teaching field has the potential to influence students as they determine their future career and consider teaching as a choice. Through my many encounters tutoring, teaching, and substitute teaching, I continue to see that students rely heavily on opinions and advice from their school's coaches, counselors, administrators, and teachers. Students are, at times, able to relate to someone of the same sex, race, or culture and/or able to have the opportunity to have an understanding of a differing sex, race, or culture when provided with diverse teachers and viewpoints. I had only one African American female teacher and no African American male teachers during my primary and secondary schooling and this too has paved the way for my interest in this topic.

This qualitative study focuses on understanding the shortage of African American male teachers through the lived experiences and perceptions of African American males currently in the teaching field. Their dedication to their students, motivation to teach, and to continuously strive to educate themselves is clear through their conversation. They express triumphs and tribulations along the way to furthering their education, what has led them into teaching and helped them remain in the field, and overall life experiences as it relates to their education and educating others. This chapter includes an overview of the national and state issue, problem

statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, research questions, definitions of terms, delimitations and limitations of the study, and the order of this study.

### **Overview of National and State Issue**

**National Overview.** The average class size in the United States elementary schools was 20 students and for junior high schools it was 24 students during 2011(NCES, 2013). There are 98,328 public schools and 30,861 private schools (NCES, 2014). In the U.S. there was a total of 3,850,100 teachers (7.5%-Hispanic, regardless of race, 82.7% White, 6.4% Black, 1.8% Asian, .1% Native Hawaiian) as of the 2011-2012 school year (NCES, 2013). During this year there was 464,900 private school teachers (5.2% Hispanic, regardless of race, 88.3% White, 3.6% Black, 1.8% Asian, and .8% two or more races, non-Hispanic) and 3,385,200 public school teachers (7.8% Hispanic, regardless of race, 81.9% White, 6.8% Black, 1.8% Asian, .1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific-Islander, .5% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1% two or more races, non-Hispanic).

The National Center for Education Statistics classifies public schools as a total of teachers in both traditional public and charter schools. This is the classification used for this research study as well. When provided with individual data for traditional public schools and charter public schools, I will specifically state this. The characteristics when comparing the traditional public school to public charter school teachers differ somewhat. The total number of traditional public school teachers, during 2011-2012, was 3,269,500 (7.6% Hispanic, 82.3% White, 6.6% Black, 1.8% Asian, .1% Native American, .5% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1% two or more races, non-Hispanic) and 115,600 charter public school teachers (13.1% Hispanic, 69.9% White, 11.8% Black, 2.8% Asian, .6% American Indian/Alaska Native, and

1.7% two or more races, non-Hispanic). White teachers make up 83% or more of the public school teaching profession in suburban, rural, and town communities (NCES, 2012).

In regards to teacher mobility in public elementary and secondary schools from 2011-12 to 2012-13, 85.7% of males remained in the same school, 6.4% left teaching, and 7.9% moved to another school (46.4% moved to a school in the same district, 51.2% moved to a public school in a different district and 2.3% moved to a private school). 83.8% of females remained in the same school, 8.1% left teaching, and 8.1%, moved to another school, (62.6% moved to a school in the same district, 34.3% moved to a school in a different district, and 3.1% moved to a private school).

**State Overview.** Teacher demographics for Eythlyen include information as recent as 2015 and data is collected every four years. In 2015 there was a total of 129,668 full time teachers (76.8% female and 23.2% male, 3% not reported, 6.4% Black, .8% two or more races, .2% American Indian, 5.7% Hispanic, 82.5% White, 1.4% Asian, and .1% Pacific Islander). In 2011 there was a total of 128,262 full time teachers (76.9% female, 23.1% male, 4.3% not reported, 6.1% Black, .7% two or more races, .1% American Indian, 5% Hispanic, 82.4% White, 1.2% Asian, and .1% Pacific Islander) (ISBE, 2016). The information for other races was relatively consistent, yet for Black teachers the percentage dropped from 9.2% in 2006 to 6.4% in Eythlyen during 2015. As is the case in most states, White teachers are the majority in Eythlyen, and the demographics of the teachers do not equal that of students.

**Eythlyen City District Overview.** Teacher demographics for the city of Eythlyen include information as recent as 2015. In 2015 there was a total of 22,559 full time teachers (76.2% female and 23.8% male, 4.5% not reported, 21.9% Black, 1.7% two or more races, .3% American Indian, 16.2% Hispanic, 51.5% White, 3.6% Asian, and .1% Pacific Islander). In 2011

there was a total of 22,257 full time teachers (76.3% female, 23.7% male, 18.6% not reported, 19.5% Black, 1.8% two or more races, .2% American Indian, 14.2% Hispanic, 42.4% White, 3.3% Asian, and .1% Pacific Islander) (ISBE, 2016).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem is that educational institutions have a shortage of African American male teachers in K-12 public schools and changes are needed for recruitment and retention initiatives. Students have limited exposure to people of color as their teachers and this is one of the reasons that youth decide to venture off into fields outside of teaching and education. If students see majority white females as representative of what a teacher is, then there is a possibility that they will not select the profession for themselves. Some teachers are fortunate enough to understand that there is a need for diversity and so they promote change as they engage diverse populations in their class to consider teaching as a potential career. Shen, Wegenke, and Cooley (2003) explain, in their argument for diversity in the teaching force that,

Diversity basically involves (a) a contrast between the racial, ethnic, and gender composition of the student and teacher populations, both now and in the future, and (b) the idea that a diversified teaching force will not only provide more role models for students but better engage them in a culturally relevant approach. (p. 112)

In the current female and White dominated teaching profession, (Shen, Wegenke, and Cooley, 2003) students have to question how their society, family, and friends will view them if they decide to become a teacher. Many stereotypes exist regarding the profession. There is a shortage particularly in minority male teachers and many do not see teaching as a preferred career.

At times people of color have greater pressure to follow a career that will help bring a higher source of income to their family and community in the near future. Additionally, students

that are fortunate to have experienced diversity, in their teacher's gender, ethnicity, and racial backgrounds, are able to vision themselves as a teacher partially due to the fact that their role models and educators in school were diverse groups of both female and male teachers (Shen, Wegenke, and Cooley, 2003; Owen, 2012). Yet due to careers, such as teaching, which is considered a "woman's job," men sometimes question whether or not education is the right choice for them and may be discouraged. Shen, Wegenke, and Cooley (2003) point out,

Educators cannot expect students to leave their gender, race, and ethnicity characteristics, as well as attitude about differences in another's cultural background, at the schoolhouse doors. It becomes a part of teachers' responsibilities to assist students in building trusting relationships to show students how to mediate differences they experience in their daily lives. (Shen, Wegenke, and Cooley, p. 112)

Changes in education policies, recruitment and retention efforts, and understanding of the needs of potential and current teachers from underrepresented populations is necessary in an effort to help promote equity and diversity in the school system and teaching force.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the shortage of African American male teachers through the lived experiences of current African American male teachers in the United States public schools. The benefit of this research is that it will add to the literature on understanding reasons why African American males enter and remain in the teaching field, the shortage of African American male teachers, and potential ways to recruit and retain African American males into the teaching profession. This will help school districts, communities, and students in an effort to diversify the teaching field and experiences of students in K-12 public schools. This particular study will focus on teachers in Eythlyen Public Schools (elementary,

middle, and high school) and show the support that exists in Eythlyen Public Schools and in the field of education that has contributed to the success of recruiting and retaining these African American male teachers, in order to help increase the low number that currently exists in the teaching field of the United States. These teachers' experiences are necessary to identify and understand the challenges African American males face as a racial minority in a field in which their gender is also a minority. It provides us ways to consider the lack of diversity in the teaching field and sheds light on the lack of teachers of color, specifically African American male teachers in the classroom.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research is significant, because it will extend one's understanding of the shortage of African American male teachers, as well as offer clarification on what motivates these teachers to enter and remain in the teaching field. It will also assist in understanding future ways to recruit and retain them. Former President Obama, educational leaders, and education policy makers have engaged in discussion and efforts to diversify teacher education, yet people of color, particularly African American males, still remain underrepresented in the field. As of the 2011-2012 school year there were 3,385,200 public school teachers (7.8% Hispanic, regardless of race, 81.9% White, 6.8% Black, 1.8% Asian, .1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific-Islander, .5% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1% two or more races, non-Hispanic) in the U.S. (NCES, 2015). Education has been federally funded for many years, yet inequities still exist and so educational leaders have to consider the ways in which diversifying the teaching field can help change this.

African American male students are unfortunately known for low test scores, high disciplinary rates, and overrepresentation in special education in U.S. public schools (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011; Howard, 2008; Howard & Fleenaugh, 2011). In order for these

students to even consider teaching as a profession they must first be able to surpass this educational system that is continuously failing them. Many stereotypes and prejudices has caused African American males to be judged and expected to have low academic performance. A diverse staff provides multiple viewpoints and experiences to help engage and ensure that all students are treated equitably. This research enlightens all of the status of teacher education and the necessity to bring attention to the underrepresentation of African American males in the teaching field in the hopes of success for change in future educational policies, and recruitment and retention efforts of this population.

### **Research Questions**

This study regarding the lived experiences of African American male teachers in Eythlyen Public Schools (traditional and charter) assisted in answering the following questions:

What are the lived experiences of African American male teachers, as it relates to their education and teaching career?

What do African Americans male teachers perceive as motivation for entering and remaining in the teaching field?

### **Definitions of Terms**

There are particular terms that are consistently used throughout this study. Below is a list of the terms and their definitions.

*African American/Black*- an American who has African and especially Black African ancestors.

*Public school*-when public school is used and not referencing a particular school, it is inclusive of all public schools, both charter and traditional district schools.

### **Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

The researcher is African American and this could present bias, yet the research focused only on the male experience. While African American females and males do share some similar experiences in educational institutions, the African American male experience is distinct and therefore those that have experienced it first-hand can best help explain this unique phenomenon (Brockenbrough, 2012). The study also included delimitations, which helped ensure the study was able to answer the research questions. The study included current African American male teachers. I chose to include current teachers, because the issues teachers face in the classroom and as they gain an education continues to change. The problems of the past do impact what is occurring now and in the future, yet those that are current teachers can shed light on what is happening now and what are feasible changes for understanding the lack of African American male teachers and how to address it.

### **Order of Study**

Chapter 1 discussed the problem of a shortage of African American male teachers in the United States K-12 public schools. It examined how researching the lived experiences can begin to educate all on why African American male teachers enter and remain in the teaching field, how this creates dialogue and research regarding recruitment and retention strategies of this population, and calls on policy actors to create change in policy to help racially diversify the teacher educator population. Chapter 2 includes a literature review that examines issues related to the shortage of African American male teachers. It reviews literature on the shortage of African American male teachers, recruitment and retention, the importance of diverse teacher educators, barriers to recruitment, teachers' salary, institutionalized racism of African American males, and HBCUs and their influence on teacher education programs. Chapter 3 explains the research design and the methods used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 includes participant

profiles. Next chapter 5 outlines the study findings and chapter 6 provides an analysis. Lastly, chapter 7 includes a summary, recommendations, and conclusion for the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this literature review, I present findings that help shed light on the shortage of African American male K-12 teachers in the United States public schools and research to consider when trying to diversify the teaching field. Included in this review is a discussion of: The Shortage of Males in the K-12 Public Schools; The Importance of Diversity in Teacher Education; Rethinking Recruitment and Retention Efforts; Considering Teacher Quality versus Quantity; Is the Teaching Salary Enough; Institutionalized Racism of African American Males; and HBCUs and their Influence on Teacher Education Programs.

### **The Shortage of African American Male Teachers in the K-12 Public Schools**

Black male teachers are represented in U.S. K-12 schools at very low numbers. Lewis (2013) discusses black male teachers and their path to teaching in U.S. public school classrooms. He includes the steps necessary to become a teacher and how this relates to black males: black males with a high school diploma; enrollment in educator preparation programs; educator preparation program completers; educator preparation programs with the highest number of black male graduates; black male education degree holders that select teaching as a profession; and the current status of black male teachers in the U.S. K-12 public schools (Lewis, 2013, p. 3). Lewis explains that most black males have a diploma or GED, and as of 2009 26,082 Black undergraduate students were enrolled in education preparation programs and 15,729 Black graduate students; 7,603 Black males in comparison to 25,725 black females completed the degree requirements to become teachers; and the top three universities that prepare black male teacher graduates from educator preparation programs include: Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, Virginia State University, and Albany State University. Only 23% of black males that completed educator preparation programs chose to pursue employment as teachers in public

schools and school districts (Lewis, 2013, p. 8). Black male students represent 7.8% of the U.S. student population and black male teachers represent 1.81% of the teaching population (Lewis, 2013, p. 9).

Toldson, (2013) too, recognizes the underrepresentation of Black male teachers in comparison to white teachers, particularly white male teachers. He explains, "The percent of White male P-12 students is twice the percent of white male teachers; the percent of black male students is more than three times the percent of black male teachers; and the percent of Hispanic male students is almost seven times the percent of Hispanic male teachers" (Toldson, 2013, p. 17). He mentions that primary school teacher was the number one profession of college educated black men and number three for white men who had at least a bachelor's degree (Toldson, 2013; Toldson & Snitman, 2010). He goes on to explain, "Secondary school teacher was number 5 for Black men and number 16 for White men. Educational administrator was number 9 for Black men and number 22 for White men, and counselor was number 10 for Black men and number 44 for White men" (Toldson, 2013, p. 18). Toldson suggests reasons for the lack of black male teachers which include: black males are less likely to graduate from college, black males are less likely to graduate in education, black males who graduate with a degree in education are less likely to become P-12 teachers" (Toldson, 2013; Ruggles et al., 2009). Cultural proficiency is suggested as a way to help students of color reach their potential, yet due to the lack of diverse teachers and racial bias these are suggested as reasons for some students, particularly black male students, not reaching their full potential. Toldson makes it clear that any teacher can teach a child, yet recruiting more black teachers helps the profession as a whole, not just the black students.

Smith, Mack, and Akyea (2004) give voice to both the African American female and male teacher in order to present their lived experiences as a teacher and the way in which having African American male teachers in the classroom is needed. The teachers were taken from a cohort of new teachers from the same small liberal arts university. Smith et al. (2004) does a great job in pointing out the need for society and educators to realize African American boys are deciding at an early age that a teaching career is not what they want to do for their future. Not only do they point out the socialization that African American boys go through as they are choosing careers, but also Smith et al. point out the lack of representation and guidance from African American teachers in the class that makes African American boys have a disconnect with careers related to education. They successfully show the alienation and reinforced stereotypical roles that are replayed in the classroom by the presence and actions of current teachers.

Clayton, Hewitt, and Gaffney (2004) focus on the factors that contribute to low achievement of males, particularly black males in K-12 and post-secondary education. They seek to find ways to create successful educational initiatives to help implement policy for this instead of focusing on the negative trend. They look at cultural resistance, gender identity, availability of black teachers, and societal priorities to understand black men and their struggle for success. They ask that higher educational institutions increase efforts of retention, modify recruitment, collaborate with other colleges and universities, create incentives to maintain gender balances, and strive to increase the number of Black males in administrative and professional ranks of higher education and K-12 (Clayton et al., 2004). Brockenbrough (2012) does a great job in addressing the need for more African American males in secondary education, and the multiple roles that these teachers hold in their position. He addresses African American males as a father

figure and mentor to the youth and addresses the issue of African American boys not having the guidance at home necessary to succeed in their future. He focuses his study on an urban school, which is usually where majority African American students reside.

Maylor (2009) questions the way in which African American men are called into teaching to fit particular needs such as assuming that black males want to be a role model, that black students will automatically connect the behaviors modeled by black teachers with their own, and that they are the most appropriate role models for black students. His research suggests that ethnicity does not enable a teacher to serve as a role model or to improve black male attainment. Instead he focuses on the need to have quality teachers that all children, particularly black children, can have access to in an effort to help their learning and achievement.

### **Rethinking Recruitment and Retention Efforts**

Recruitment and retention of teachers is a great concern in the teaching profession. Not only is there a shortage in the amount of minorities teaching, but also the rate of recruitment and retention of teachers in general needs to be addressed. Great teachers are leaving the profession and those that enter the profession, shortly after having earned their teaching degree, are only remaining in the profession a few years before moving on to another career. Kearney (2008) explains reasons that have contributed to this lack of retention, such as the competition with corporate America for the brightest and talented young people, the fact that professionals with the same degree as teachers are earning higher salaries, teachers are mostly women and opportunities for advancement for women has greatened, lack of support, poor working conditions, and student discipline problems. Brown and Butty's (1999) study of African American male teachers in a suburban school district helped predict the teachers' career and educational aspirations and compared these to findings in the literature. The motivation to impart

knowledge was a predictor for educational aspirations and the undergraduate major was a predictor for career aspirations. They suggest that school districts create support systems that focus on encouraging and assisting minority teachers to continue their education and professional growth in the field of education; school district personnel need to inquire about motivation overall and reasons for choosing teaching; districts should choose exemplary teachers to serve as mentors for new minority teachers; and minority incentives should continue in relation to adequate compensation, professional growth, development, and enhanced working conditions.

Farinde, Allen, and Lewis (2016) focus on twelve African American women teachers and their choice to remain in the teaching field. Their article discusses black teachers in general and gives specific examples regarding black women. They recognize that black teachers' "abilities to bridge culture and curriculum stem from their content knowledge, pedagogical training, and a shared cultural identity with their students (Farinde et al., 2016, Villegas et al, 2012). They use black feminist thought to explore reasons that affect black teachers' retention. They suggest having great administrative support, salary increases over time, and professional advancement for school leaders and policymakers.

Haberman (1999) tracks teachers that attended an urban teacher preparation program, Milwaukee Teacher Education program. He tracked the graduates, secured evaluations of the program, and gathered evaluations from the teachers regarding their principals. He found that successful urban minority students can be recruited, selected, and prepared; minority graduates who live in the area are likely to remain; and the on the job approach prepares teachers evaluated as successful by superiors. He suggests that schools, in addition to searching in universities, should consider finding college graduates from the community and offer them a chance to complete alternative certification programs, as well as learn on the job.

Fairchild, Tobias, Corcoran, Djukic, Kovner, and Noguera (2012) examine the effects of relational demography on teacher job satisfaction, which is a “set of racial and gender congruency items between teacher and principals, teachers and teachers, and teachers and students” (p. 170). Supervisor support, attitudes, autonomy, and procedural justice are all positively associated with job satisfaction, and high job stress and poor student-teacher relationships are associated with job dissatisfaction (Fairchild et al., 2012). Fairchild et al. (2012) explain, “When the racial composition of students is equal to or exceeds 70% of the entire student population, and the teacher shares the same race with the majority of students at the school, this racial congruency was positively associated with job satisfaction” (p. 188).

Croke, Dale, and Ebenstein (2013) consider the need to recruit teachers with cultural sensitivity and those that are qualified for the subjects they teach. They focus on New York City public school teachers, as they have "40% of all students who are Black or Hispanic while just 15% of all teachers were Black or Hispanic in 2006-2007" (Croke et al., 2013, p. 45). They discuss the need to invest in teaching assistants in order to create a more diverse pool of teacher candidates. In NYC during 2000, 4% of teaching assistants were black males and 2% of teaching assistants nationwide were black males (p. 46). Paraprofessional-to-teacher programs are suggested as a way to increase the supply of minority teacher candidates and these candidates are likely to stay in education and to teach in high need schools (Croke et al., 2013).

Lewis (2006) states the alarming statistics that African American students are 20% of the public school population, while African American male teachers are only 1%. He examines this disproportionate number of African American male teachers in K-12 public schools within his research study (p. 224). He surveyed 147 African American teachers in three urban school districts in Louisiana to better understand the strategies school districts could implement to

increase African American male teachers' presence. He found that the most important recruitment mechanisms for African American male teachers were: helping young people, needing a job, and contributions to family (Lewis, 2006). He suggests that school districts stress at job fairs the difference that these teachers can make on students' lives as they reach their goals and become productive members of society, universities need to stress to African American males that teaching jobs are readily available for them after graduation, and lastly that school districts have to remind the potential teachers that their efforts in teaching contribute to humanity in a way that cannot be done in other professions (Lewis, 2006, p. 240). The top three retention mechanisms were: job security, contributions to humanity, and goals (short and long term). Other recommendations he suggests are partnering university teaching programs with 2 year institutions due to their great population of African American students, beginning recruitment process as early as high school, set the hiring of African American males as a priority, and consider historically Black colleges and universities.

### **The Importance of Diversity in Teacher Education**

According to the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (NCDTF) (2004) more teachers of color would increase the number of role models for students of color; provide opportunities for all students to learn about ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity; be able to enrich and diversify student's learning because of shared racial, ethnic, and cultural identities and serve as cultural brokers, able not only to help students navigate their school environment and culture, but also to increase the involvement of other teachers and their students' parents. This report explains how this can help social and relational areas, and most importantly it will help to close the achievement gap of students. NCDTF argues that while there is much research completed on dropout rates, attendance issues, disciplinary referrals, and such, in relation to

education, limited data exist on the necessity to have teachers of color in the classroom. They then argue that from the studies they have reviewed thus far the data has shown that students that have teachers of color or ethnic backgrounds that match their own tend to have higher academic, personal, and social performance. The report addresses how this does not in any way mean that those that are culturally competent teachers are not able to do the same.

Also, it explains teachers from different ethnic groups that teach with culturally responsive techniques and with content specific approaches increase students' academic performance significantly. The report makes it clear that teachers of color have higher performance expectations for students of color from their own ethnic groups. The report has suggested ways in which we can recruit and retain teachers of color. NCDTF (2004) suggests alternative teacher education programs; early outreach/pre-collegiate programs for middle and high school students, community college outreach programs; scholarships, grants, and fellowships to provide financial incentives; loan and loan forgiveness programs to defray the costs of their education and para-educator programs to target and recruit para-educators to become licensed teachers.

Demographics play a great role in factors associated with teacher turnover. Each of the demographics discussed in this section of the review reveal particular insights regarding ways in which the individual demographic is impacting African American males, specifically teachers. Mabokela's (2007) focus on the performance pressures and stereotypes that African American male teachers endure during their career as a teacher really adds on to the discussion by giving two sides of the story. The need to have more African American teachers, males especially, is often discussed; yet the struggles and unpleasant experiences that they sometimes have to battle are not focused on. Mabokela (2007) relates to Brockenbrough (2013) and Brown (2012) as he

highlights the difference in teacher's experiences based on race and gender. Brown does a great job in historicizing teacher education, in relation to African American males and societal views. He highlights parts of the interviews conducted with the African American male teachers.

Douglas, Lewis, Henderson, Scott, and Garrison-Wade (2008) acknowledge concern regarding the success and lack thereof of black students in public schools. Too often negative external factors are considered, such as black students' academic performance, inadequate academic preparation, and lack of family support for Black students, yet Douglas et al. considers the impact White teachers have on black students. There are great disparities that exist between white and black students' educational outcomes. Most students are taught by white teachers and their research recognizes that teachers sometimes view black students from a deficit view and this impacts the outcome of their education and performance. They discuss the cultural misunderstandings and base their study on Milner's theoretical assumptions regarding experiences of white teachers teaching students of color. They found that the black students felt they were treated differently due to their different beliefs and values that do not match that of the schools. Also, stereotypes that white teachers have regarding black students need to be reversed, teachers need to be aware of their frames of reference, so that bias and prejudices do not interfere with their profession, and all students need equitable expectations of standards.

Crowell, Woodson, and Rashid (2013) highlight implications in regards to the lack of black male teachers, which include: few accessible role models for black male students, overrepresentation of black students in special education, disproportionate dropout rates for students of color, and underrepresentation of culturally relevant material in the curriculum. Diversity in the teaching force is one of the top concerns and it has remained a consistent issue. In Riley's (1998) speech he addresses new ways to improve the quality of teaching and focuses

on issues, such as missing the mark in preparing new teachers to recruit, issues with an outdated teacher training and support system, creating national partnerships, and improving the ways of recruiting teachers and incentives for veteran teachers. He mentions that “the increasing diversity in our classrooms and the lack of diversity of our teaching force” (Riley, 1988, p. 7) is an issue, yet throughout his speech he did not go beyond this statement to explain potential ways to address this.

Hodgkinson (2002) agrees with Shen, Wegenke, and Cooley (2003) and Riley (1998) regarding the need for a more diverse teaching field. He, too, explains the growing number of diverse students and the steadily increasing white teaching force. Hodgkinson expresses how black teachers, or minority teachers, have the ability to benefit black, minority, and white students as well. In his argument it is clear that he is not acknowledging that every child needs an education from a person that matches their background, whether gender, race, or ethnicity, but instead they should have opportunities to interact with a diverse range of teachers. He mentions the need for more diversity in higher education and how this could impact students’ decision to take on teaching as a future career.

In the demographics, regarding current teachers, it is clear that there is a shortage in minority teachers across the United States. African American teachers had the greatest decline in the teaching force and they typically work in urban areas, where the school makeup is racially and ethnically diverse (Shen, Wegenke, and Cooley, 2003, 116; Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2007; Owen, 2012), which means that a great number of students do not encounter African American teachers in their schools. It is great to have a higher representation of African American teachers in more urban schools or schools that serve high minority populations, yet these same schools encounter high rates of teacher turnover. Scafidi et al. (2007) report issues of

race and poverty as a key characteristic for teacher turnover in Georgia schools. Scafidi et al. explain that teachers often left schools that had “lower test scores, lower income, or higher proportions of minorities” (p. 145). Unfortunately, this tends to increase the number of low quality teachers teaching minority students. Therefore, they have less chance of receiving a teacher from a diverse background and a high risk of receiving a teacher who is not highly qualified. Scafidi et al. focus on how attrition patterns vary depending on the type of school and they examined exits for teachers from schools. They found that “schools with large percentages of black students have much higher attrition rates than other types of schools (Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2007, p. 157). Their research supports the need for more diversity in the profession, especially if the majority white teachers do not want to work in the schools that have the greatest number of minority children.

Hanushek et al. (2001) also found that teacher mobility is often related to student characteristics, particularly race. They explain factors that would lead to teachers switching schools or exiting the teaching profession. Their results indicate that race and achievement determines a teacher’s likelihood to leave more than salary does. Hanushek et al. state that “non-black, non-Hispanic teachers systematically prefer non-black, non-Hispanic students, while the opposite is true for black and Hispanic teachers” (p. 1). Student’s racial demographics, according to their conclusions, had more of an impact on teachers that were switching schools versus those that decided to leave teaching completely. They suggest that schools pay teachers more if they are serving high rates of African American and/or Hispanic students. Simon and Johnson (2015) researched six studies that analyze teacher turnover as a function of the school instead of the students. They found that teachers are not leaving the schools because of the students and the high poverty. They instead acknowledge the working conditions as the reason for the turnover.

Teachers had very difficult teaching conditions and it was hard for students to learn. The teachers appreciated positivity in school leadership, collegial relationships, and school culture the most.

Mabokela and Madsen (2007) explore African American teachers who are in suburban areas, since most research focuses on those in urban areas due to their higher representation. Their study examines how intergroup differences created performance pressures for African American teachers and the affect that this had on their environments. Seven male and seven female teachers explained their experiences and themes that were apparent included: automatic notice, burden of dispelling myths and representing their race to coworkers, and lastly the need to defend their status to have accomplishments recognized. The African American teachers recognized that they were expected to take ownership for issues that only affected the African American students and had to prove themselves regarding negative stereotypes that exist about African Americans. They mentioned their need to consistently prove themselves as qualified and performance pressures that caused them to feel constrained and unable to navigate the school's culture. They recommended further examination of organizational workplace issues for teachers of color.

Brown (2012) explores the theoretical implications around the African American male teachers as the central agent of social change for African American male students. His case study focuses on a historical analysis and used ethnographic interviews. In his research of an urban school district in the Midwest, he makes it clear in his findings that society has set the notion that any educated middle-class African American male can reach African American boys in the classroom; therefore, they all are valuable as teachers in the classroom. However, he provides findings that go against this and he discusses how the practice of teaching black boys is pedagogical and not just an outcome of race and gender. He proposes that instead of a focus on

African American males as a role model and authoritative figure in the classroom they should show African American males in multiple perspectives and want to recruit them for diversity of intellectual, scholarly, mathematical, and artistic knowledge and capacities. He strives to change the way that African American males are perceived in the teaching profession and does so by providing counter-stories of African American male teachers that portray their great experiences in the profession.

Owen (2012) confronts the lack of African American roles models for African American students and the need for African American teachers to engage colleagues about issues of race and the challenges students face. She explains that if students do not have someone to identify with, it can potentially cause negative self-esteem issues, it can keep students from building rapport with teachers, and can possibly keep students from assessing academic content (Owen, 2012, p. 6). She is biracial and explains her story as well as interviews with female African American teachers. Themes that occur in her research include: cyclical avoidance of discussing race due to a lack of diverse staff, the education burden that occurs when the African American teachers have to educate everyone regarding diversity, and hostile work environments. Again, the need to continue discussion on race, ethnicity, and gender surfaced and “the dialogue requires movement from what we say we value in our democratic society toward specific actions. Employing individuals from diversified backgrounds is an action with a message” (Shen, Wegenke, and Cooley, 2003, p. 113).

The need for diversity within the teaching profession is not a new concern and these authors ask for a call of action. Brockenbrough (2012) discusses the need for students, African American students specifically, to have a mentor-mentee relationship that helps inform them about teaching as a career decision. He explains how recruitment methods are needed early on to

target students before college, and incentive and benefits are necessary in attracting highly qualified African Americans who may consider teaching as a profitable career. Similar to Mabokela and Madsen (2007) and Brown (2012), Brockenbrough mentions the necessity to stop viewing African American male teachers as someone who has to dispel a myth, represent his race as a whole, defend the status of his accomplishments, and engage in cultural switching. Within his study he proves how this is often an issue for African American teachers. African Americans in general may have somewhat similar experiences, yet the experience of an African American male is quite different from that of an African American female teacher's experiences. Within his study he includes the black masculinity studies conceptual framework as he delves deeply into issues regarding gender and power within the teaching profession.

Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell. (2011), also recognize the need for more African American teachers, particularly male, and research a pre-collegiate course that encouraged high school students of color to consider teaching as a future career. They use survey and research data to observe factors that encouraged 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade African American boys to possibly see themselves as a teacher. Teaching begins with the experiences that students have in the education system and "more than any other group, African American males find themselves at a serious educational disadvantage in the public school system" (Bianco et al., 2011; Howard, 2008; Howard & Fleenaugh, 2011). Many inequities exist that prevent African American students from going to college and Bianco et al. point out the need to address this issue of recruitment at the high school level before the students drop out or are pushed out of the schooling system. They explain the need to create teacher pipeline models to "address the unique and complex perspectives and experiences of young African American men" (p. 381). Bianco et al. research

agrees with Brockenbrough (2012) in regards to the necessity to begin recruiting students into teaching before they attend college.

Graham and Erwin (2011) present a phenomenological investigation regarding the perceptions of the teaching profession as a foreseeable career for high achieving African American boys. They chose sixty-three African American eleven-year old boys from the same urban district and had the students complete a perceptual analysis inventory, construct a circle map, sketch a drawing of a classroom teacher, and join in on a focus group session. The boys were mainly not interested in a teaching career because of themes associated with negative perceptions of teachers and teaching, view of schools as oppressive institutions, and African American males as nonconformists. Graham and Erwin ask that K-12 school districts “critically examine curricula, pedagogical practices, and school policies to ensure that students feel valued, respected, and included throughout their educational experiences” (p. 412). African American male students realize that the education system does not support them and within these themes it is evident why less African American males would consider teaching.

Smith, Mack, and Akyea (2004) point out the pedagogical and societal benefits to having more African American male role models for both African Americans and other ethnic and racial groups. In their study of 38 African American male honor students from high schools in the Gary-Indiana School district they investigated why the brightest of the young, African-American male high school graduates are not selecting a career in teaching. Their use of surveys provide data on obstacles that prevent students the opportunity to pursue an interest in the teaching profession, such as a lack of career awareness, lack of positive information regarding the profession, and lack of encouragement. They discuss how some African American males who are interested in teaching are not able to gain entry due to barriers, such as test requirements. The

students in the study had potential to pass the barriers that often keep African American boys from obtaining degrees in teaching, such as acceptance into college, teaching programs, and passing teaching exams. The youth were the top of their class and understood that teaching is not a top choice for African Americans males. Smith et al. state,

As the proportion of white American teachers grows, role modeling that might encourage minority students to pursue careers in education decreases, possibly further decreasing the already inadequate ratio of minority teachers to minority pupils in the schools. While the United States' population is growing in its racial/ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, the teaching force is not. (p. 76)

They want to see strategies created to recruit African American males into teaching before they even begin college. They see the necessity of teachers that represent the makeup of students and wanted to make sure the students understand prior to graduating high school that they can successfully become a teacher.

Martino and Rezai-Rashti (2010) discuss the shortage of and necessity to retain African American teachers and they focused on how this coincides with the underachievement of boys and the feminization of teaching. In doing so, they research solutions that could help recruit and retain teachers. Their case study provides African American teachers' perspectives regarding their impact on male boys and they also highlight social justice and equity issues that relate to the shortage in African American teachers. They address the role that African American male teachers play in the classroom and how this leads to a role outside of the classroom as well.

Martino and Rezai-Rashti explain how the existence of an African American male teacher that is effective, educated, and encouraging particularly provided young males, and females too, with a counter narrative from what they typically saw and heard throughout their lives. The male

teacher interviewees display many instances that their students and students' parents often appreciate and acknowledge them right away, because the teachers do not fit the stereotype of African American males that they are accustomed to. Martino and Rezai-Rashti attribute the interviewees' discussion of teacher qualities as representative of a role model for many students.

One of the interviewees specifically divides the needs of girls and boys within their schooling and how they differ. Due to the feminization of teaching, that Martino and Rezai-Rashti discuss, the men interviewed display the necessity to address this to other male teachers, as a recruitment strategy, so that the other African American males see the need for them as teachers. One of the interviewees is very open in discussing how he treats his boys and girls different in some aspects, so that he can better connect with the students, specifically the boys who often do not have many interactions with African American male teachers. Interviewees in the study present their stories as a realization for other African American males and this portrays the reasons that they believe can help retain teachers. The interviewees display their compassion, and through the experiences of more seasoned teachers they were able to influence others and help others, possibly those interested or in their beginning stages of teaching, understand their purpose, goals, and outcomes for entering the teaching field and remaining a teacher.

Little attention has been paid to minority teacher educators. Ladson-Billings (2005) uses the metaphor of "Big House" to help readers understand the barriers to reform that African American teacher educators experience while working at predominantly white institutions, yet they use the "Big House" to overcome these barriers and bring about institutional change. She explains African Americans' struggle for freedom and social justice as she relates this across generations. She uses the life stories of seven teacher educators who experience positive and negative aspects in their teaching positions and relates the stories back to black history. Teacher

educators have a great impact on the future of teachers and their preparation for effectively teaching diverse classrooms.

Izadinia (2014) offers a literature review that focuses on the impact that teacher educators' identity has on the teaching profession. Teacher educators "instruct, guide, teach and support student teachers" (p. 426). They highly impact the quality of future teachers.

She mentions this is not a highly researched topic, but she includes fifty-two research papers.

This research focuses on the challenges and tensions that exists as teachers are inducted and how this plays a role in teacher educators' identity development over time. She found that negative self-views are developed regarding the teacher's abilities and professional identities. Self-support and community support helps teachers during their identity development. Key features of academic induction included: acting as a learning community, cultivating supportive and professional relationships, encouraging self-inquiry and research, and involving the teacher in reflective activities.

Teacher educators can begin to help address retention issues. Yost (2006) uses multiple sources of data such as interviews with principals, interviews with teachers, and observations of teachers. Teachers in the study focus on the diverse types of field and student teaching experiences that allowed them to connect to the content they taught and the location they taught at. Their preparation program contributes to their confidence to use different management strategies while at the school. The teachers explain how successful they were at resolving behavior and academic challenges that students endured in the classroom and they gave credit to their teacher education program for providing them with the tools necessary to address these issues. According to Yost, teacher education programs highly impact whether or not new

teachers will decide to stay in the field due to the quality of preparation the individuals receive while in the program.

Often retention of teachers who are already teaching is observed, yet this article provides the necessity of starting to retain teachers before they have even began teaching. It stresses the need to examine preparation programs and see how to prepare them and provide what they need in order to persist through and remain in the teaching profession. An interviewee states,

What surprised me was probably having no support; being put in there with nothing . . . they basically throw you 33 kids and that was it. If there was something going on in your classroom, there was no one for you to go to. There were two guidance counselors for 1,600 kids, so my kids never saw a guidance counselor, even the ones who desperately needed it. (Yost, 2006, p. 71)

Yost's article focuses on teachers' experiences and provides a platform for others to recognize and support teachers as they voice their experiences and opinions. The interviewees discuss major obstacles that successful novice teachers face during their first year of teaching; teacher education or other factors that shaped their current views and successes; and to what extent teachers were able to use critical reflection as a problem-solving tool. Hatch (2015) addresses the many ways teachers are attacked and provide teachers, future teachers, and teacher allies resources regarding how to implement future change. Through its use of counter narratives, public school advocates are able to go against some of the negative aspects of the reform movements that philanthropist, politicians, and others have created. Lastly, it provides strategies that educators can use to have their voice heard and help to recreate education for the benefit of all students (Hodgkins, 2002).

### **Barriers to Recruitment**

Many hurdles prevent African American males from obtaining a teaching degree and working in the classroom. NCDTF (2004) discusses the unfortunate realization that passing the required standardized test is in many cases fewer than 50 percent (p. 6). They explain that the content area testing is often easier for teachers of color and the basic skills test usually provides more difficulty. Also, NCDTF provides information regarding the fact that many who do well on both of the praxis test (content and basic skills), often did well on the SAT test (p. 8). This report helps readers to understand that testing is a barrier for teachers of color and may sway them from choosing this as a career.

Szecszi and Spillman (2012) argue that with an increase of minority teachers, schools will have an increase of multicultural knowledge base. They credit low pay, difficulty of standardized tests, lack of support in college, and lack of academic/emotional preparation for the low percentage of minority teachers. They sought to gain an in depth understanding of three minority teacher candidates and their experiences, both positive and negative, as they work towards becoming a future teacher. Themes include: teaching was not a first choice, but life experiences led them to the profession; they want to be a role model for all children, yet are a great fit for culturally diverse children due to shared experiences, an extensive support system in the teacher candidates' socio-cultural contexts facilitated their experiences in the teacher program; and additional support was needed to meet all challenges, yet no preferential treatment was expected. Overall, these teacher candidates seem to have enjoyed their experiences in their program and felt well prepared, yet there was mention that even though the university focuses on diversity, their program lacked it.

Dee (2005) acknowledges that “the achievement of minority students is widely seen as a critical component of promoting broader social equality with respect to a variety of outcomes

like educational attainment and earnings as well as crime, health, and family structure” (p. 158). His study evaluates whether assignment to a demographically similar teacher influences the teacher’s subjective evaluations of student behavior and performance. He uses the National Education Longitudinal Survey of 1988 and he found that the racial, ethnic, and gender dynamics between students and teachers does effect the teacher’s perceptions of student performance. Race and ethnicity impact low socioeconomic students and those in the South the greatest. He suggests creating policy that increases recruitment of underrepresented teachers and improving teacher effectiveness for all teachers through better professional development for teachers. Amos (2010) questions teacher preparation programs and whether they are created for future white teachers versus all teachers. She specifically focuses on the multicultural class requirement that students take during their teaching program and the way in which students of color are often silenced or left out of the conversation. She suggests in her findings that the students of color were often left frustrated due to the disrespectful nature of the conversations or lack of willingness to understand diversity that white peers presented. The students believed that they knew everything there was to know about minorities and embraced colorblindness. The students of color also had feelings of despair and fear of retaliation as their white peers saw no need for the multicultural class in their teacher preparation program.

Davis, Frank, and Clark (2013) focus on a black male mathematic teacher’s experiences and consider how his case and other similar cases can inform efforts to increase the number of black male mathematic teachers in U.S. schools. The U.S. Department of Education created a policy initiative called the Teach Campaign to recruit more Black teachers, particularly males, into teaching. They focus on HBCUs and urban high schools as places to recruit more black teachers in hopes of reaching 5% nationally by 2015. Davis et al. (2013) question whether the

research was based on experiences and practices of black males as they created this policy initiative, especially considering limited literature on this topic. They fear that the goals of recruitment, such as a solution to the underachievement of Black boys, could potentially cause problems and added stressful expectations on Black teachers. They suggest that the Teach Campaign reexamine the expectations placed upon young black male teachers; the Teach Campaign should consider multiple pathways to teaching that could encourage more black men to become mathematics teachers; and the Teach Campaign should think of ways to leverage the support of families to encourage more young black men to become mathematics teachers.

### **Is the Teaching Salary Enough?**

Teacher salaries are a topic of concern as teachers are sometimes overpaid or underpaid, which causes policy concerns. Stoddard (2005) examines how teacher salaries are usually adjusted for the cost of living, yet this does not account for welfare differences across states. He considers the need to adjust salaries for area amenities and opportunities, which he measures by other wage premiums for workers in the state. The cost of living, he explains, largely reflects the rent, which reflects compensation for the amenities in the area. According to Stoddard (2005), “adjusting for rents may therefore distort accurate comparisons of teacher welfare across states” (p.336). Teachers often complain about low salaries and it prevents some from entering or remaining in the teaching profession. Imazeki (2005) recognizes the high number of shortages with elementary and secondary teachers each year and researches how transfer attrition may be influenced by factors others than that of exit attrition factors. She collects data from new teachers in Wisconsin and estimated the hazard rates for transfers and exits. She found that transfers respond better when salary is increased relative to other nearby districts and salary increases, for more experienced and newer female teachers, may reduce exit attrition rates as well.

Gilpin's (2010) research focuses on non-teaching wages of former teachers to understand attrition, he includes the wage differences between teaching and non-teaching occupations and teacher work environment. The Teacher Follow-up Survey and Schools and Staffing survey data are used. He found that wage mattered most to teachers that were inexperienced (6 years or less) and work environment matters for both inexperienced and experienced teachers. Wage matters less than work environment for both groups of teachers. If a student has a student practicum experience the attrition rate is lowered and if they have a certification or education degree it has no effect on attrition. Teachers that are in a household of \$40,000 (not including their own salary) or more are more likely to leave teaching as well. Loeb et al. (2005) use the California teacher survey data and link it to district data on salaries and staffing patterns. They then examine a range of school conditions and demographic factors and explain that high levels of school turnover are affected by poor working conditions and salaries, as well as by student characteristics. They explain that large class sizes, facility problems, multitrack schools, and lack of textbooks are significant factors in predicting high rates of turnover. Additional predictors include: professional development, the involvement of parents, and the quality and appropriateness of tests teachers are required to administer. They acknowledge the need to find ways to address this through policy and practice.

Gritz and Theobald (1996) provide research that explains a reason why teachers tend to work less in a district. Their longitudinal dataset included 9,756 Washington teachers. They found that teachers tend to leave earlier if districts spend more money on central administration or for non-teachers involved in the classroom instruction. Female teachers stay longer if local teacher salaries increase relatively the same as local employment, and males stay longer if they are paid more across the state. They use a generalized variant of a transition probability model to

study movements among the alternative career paths open to teachers. Hanushek (2007) also acknowledges the need for teachers to have higher compensation. He examines “pay parameters,” and explained, it is highly based on the relationship between teacher characteristics and the outcome they have on students. He makes the argument that quality, overall experience, and graduate education, do not have a great relationship to student performance. He asks that all rethink the characteristics that are needed when measuring teacher quality. When considering a teacher compensation plan he suggests: Have rewards for individual class performance, include a teacher evaluation component that is based on test scores of students, create evaluation systems that test subjects that the state does not use for accountability, consider awarding principals and administrator’s rewards based on student performance, and provide extra financial support to quality teachers working with disadvantaged schools. Rewarding top performers, according to Hanushek, does not ensure high-quality teachers for all subjects. He considers performance incentives, such as allowing teachers to choose their training, instead of mandated requirements for both pre-service and in-service training and development.

Keuren and Wilson (2002) report on a study regarding financial incentive proposals to improve the quality of teachers and teaching. They include a focus group of eight suburban high school teachers. The teachers discuss issues of how to revise the teacher compensation packages in an effort to improve student achievement. The main ideas presented include: acknowledging that no one individual inside or outside the school is responsible for student achievement, understanding that training and experiences are well accepted as basic factors in salary schedules, and there is no common agreement as to what effective teaching is. They explored the tensions between the traditional salary schedule based on degrees and years of experience with salary schedules based on performance.

## **Institutionalized Racism of African American Males**

McGrady and Reynolds (2013) acknowledge that many bias exist in relation to teachers' views of students based on their racial/ethnic identity due to stereotypes. Their research suggests that white teachers tend to give positive behavioral evaluations for white students and negative evaluations for black students. Their findings show the possibility of a strained teacher-student interaction. Their findings suggest that there are many implications involved with not having a diverse teaching staff and/or a staff that is culturally responsive to the needs of all students. Students' experiences in education create a pathway for their future careers and with a strained teacher-student relationship this can potentially impact their decision to become teachers. Milner (2012) challenges negative views about black teachers and their teaching. Milner does this by highlighting an interview with a black female middle school teacher and uses her story to shed light on the many negative perceptions that exist about black teachers and to negate these perceptions. These perceptions include: black teachers are too strict and provide too much structure; black teachers yell at students and damage their self-esteem; black teachers do not provide enough creativity in the classroom; and black teachers become too personal with students and cross the professional-personal boundaries (p. 28). Milner uses a case study, Critical Race Theory, and counter-narrative as a tool for understanding the experiences of black teachers. She recognizes that black teachers are not the same and each have a different story, so she uses this interview to go against the negative perceptions that exist regarding black teachers.

Brockenbrough's (2013) study focuses on in-depth, one on one interviews of eleven African American male teachers and looks at their black male identity formation over their life span, professional experiences as a black male teacher, and thoughts on significant emergent study findings. He focuses on middle school and high school teachers and most of the teachers

presented themes that represented: identity politics across intraracial borders that placed their black male identities under scrutiny, and their disconnect with black life in Brewerton and its influence on their teaching experiences (Brockenbrough, 2013). He explains:

9 of the 11 study participants also described instances when their Blackness and Black maleness afforded culturally relevant pedagogical insights into their Black students' learning needs, and 8 participants spoke specifically to Black cultural and political solidarity in the midst of white supremacy that informed their work with Black students. (p. 36)

Brockenbrough makes it clear of the need for black teachers in the teaching field.

### **HBCUs and their Influence on Teacher Education Programs**

Dilworth (2012) focuses on the ways HBCUs address education reform in the past and how these institutions are often marginalized or absent in the discussion on key teacher education issues and trends. She argues that due to this the HBCUs' voice is absent in the educational policy arena and "has disadvantaged a number of teacher quality initiatives and that there are compelling reasons for these institutions to continue to do best in the preparation of educators" (Dilworth, 2012, p. 121). She recognizes that there is an absence of education policy research by and about African Americans and marginalized groups. Nnazor, Sloan, and Higgings (2004) focus on how historically black colleges and universities respond to the accountability environment within teacher preparation programs. Not passing the teacher licensure test is a fearful reality for students entering teacher education programs and students at HBCUs, according to Nnazor et al., typically receive scores lower than what is acceptable to pass. They mention sensitization and enlightenment activities are often used by most HBCUs as they often have meetings with different levels of academic and administrative leadership, meetings with

Arts and Science faculty, meetings with students' representatives, and email and bulletin board announcements. During these meetings they discuss the implications of doing badly on the licensure tests and how it effects both students and the universities and the necessity of teacher preparation for the universities and colleges. They focus on curriculum alignment, data management systems and diagnosis of students' performance, test taking practice with computer assisted instruction, and policy implications. Some policy concerns for instance are a focus on licensure and not on liberal and professional knowledge and skills that are not tested, and education teachers teaching to the test. They explain that this leads to a decline in the number of African American teachers as African American student enrollment continues to rise and funding is needed to support HBCUs' initiatives to continue implementation in an effort to better teacher preparation programs and student's success in them.

### **Summary**

The literature review presented many authors that have written about an aspect of the necessity of African American male teachers. It enlightens all about what is currently available via research on this phenomenon and what needs to be researched further as we address the shortage of this population. The study of literature that highlights the African American male experience in education enables all to gain a better understanding of the themes that continue to arise as one tries to comprehend the lack of African American males in the teaching field. Increasing the presence of African American males in the teaching profession and diversifying the profession is a necessity. Research on the shortage of African American males in the teaching profession has great importance when attempting to provide children with a diverse education and experience. The authors present multiple reasons that have led to this shortage, such as

insufficient experiences and education in K-12 public schools, low salary, difficulty in passing state required exams, teaching viewed as women's work, and a host of other reasons.

Chapter two discussed information regarding the shortage of African American male teachers in K-12 public schools, rethinking recruitment and retention efforts, the importance of diversity in teacher education, barriers to recruitment, if the teaching salary is enough, institutionalized racism of African American males, and HBCUs and their influence on teacher education programs. These topics cover literature that is necessary in understanding the lived experiences of African American males, why there is such a shortage across the U.S. school system of African American males, and potential ways to help recruit and retain this population. Chapter three discusses the research design and methodology.

### CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This qualitative phenomenological research study provides current African American male teachers in Eythlyen K-12 charter and traditional public schools a space to express their lived experiences leading up to and during their teaching trajectory. Qualitative studies “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 8) and “seeks to discover and to describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them” (Erickson, 2011, p. 43). According to Willis, (2007) phenomenology “focuses on the subjectivity of reality, continually pointing out the need to understand how humans view themselves and the world” (p.53). The focus is on “understanding the perspective of the person or persons being studied” (Willis, 2007, p. 53).

This study collects the personal lived experiences of African American male teachers through qualitative interviews, which are conversations that “elicit depth and detail about the research topic by following up on answers given by the interviewee during the discussion” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 5). In-depth analysis of in-person and phone, semi-structured, and audio recorded interviews and interview notes were used to observe the phenomenon of the shortage of African American male teachers and to understand their lived experiences as it relates to their education and teaching career. Semi-structured interviews are “defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 3) and they have “a specific topic to learn about, prepare a limited number or questions in advance, and plans to ask follow-up questions” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 31). Parker (2005) clarifies that interviews are never completely structured, “because people always say things that spill beyond the

structure, before the interview starts and when the recorder has been turned off” (p. 53). I use a set of interview questions to guide discussion, yet I allow the conversation to flow naturally and for the participants to decide which information is most relevant to understanding them.

Qualitative interviews allow interviewees the chance to express how they “experience the world, its episodes and events, rather than speculations about why they have certain experiences” (Brinkman, 2013, p. 23). I provide a literature review that discusses current research that relates to the shortage of African American male teachers, a participant profile for each teacher, discover the themes that are consistent in each participant’s response, and analyze the findings. The themes help to create generalizations in an effort to consider understanding these teachers’ journey, teacher recruitment and retention strategies of African American males, and to influence potential educational policies in the future.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) was developed by Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown, and Gail Hackett in 1994. SCCT is based on Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory, which focuses on “explaining psychosocial functioning” and the “causal model, behavior, cognitive, and other personal factors and environment events that all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally” (Bandura, 1988, p. 275). Yet, SCCT includes a focus on career as it is intended to:

Help organize this rapidly expanding literature and to provide specific hypotheses, anchored in general social cognitive theory, aimed at directing new inquiry. The theory encompasses three interrelated models of academic/career interest development, choice, and performance; and a fourth model, focusing on academic and career satisfaction. (Lent, 2006, p. 13)

SCCT concentrates on “relatively dynamic and situation specific aspects of people” (Lent, p. 13, 2006) in order to “represent active constructions or processes that can, themselves, affect key career opportunities, like choice actions and performance attainments” (Lent, 2006, p. 14). Core concepts of SCCT include self-efficacy, outcome expectation, interest, and goals, which are contextualized by supports and barriers individuals encounter in their life. Bandura (1986) refers to self-efficacy as judgments of what one is capable of doing to fulfill an action for some sort of performance. Lent (2005) adds on that they are a “set of self-beliefs” (p. 104). When considering ways to measure self-efficacy, Lent (2006) suggests content or tasks-specific self-efficacy (“beliefs in one’s ability to perform the specific tasks required to succeed within a given domain under normative conditions”), coping efficacy (“beliefs in one’s ability to negotiate particular domain-specific obstacles”), process efficacy (“perceived ability to manage generic tasks necessary for career preparation, entry, adjustment, or change across diverse occupational paths”), or self-regulatory efficacy (“perceived ability to guide and motivate oneself to perform self-enhancing behaviors, such as studying, despite deterring conditions”) (p. 16). Bandura (1997) explains that personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states all create changes within self-efficacy beliefs based on how the “individual attends to, remembers, and interprets them” (Lent, 2006, p. 16).

Lent (2006) refers to outcome expectations as “beliefs about the consequences or outcomes of performing particular behaviors” (p. 17) and Bandura (1986) explains examples of outcome expectations, such as anticipated social, material, and self-evaluative outcomes. Goals in SCCT focuses on choice-content goals and performance goals (Lent, 2006). Choice-content goals help motivate individuals towards particular studies or types of work and performance goals help individuals decide on how successfully they want to be at this. “Patterns of likes,

dislikes, and indifferences” help to determine interests. Contextual supports and barriers in SCCT focuses on “environmental supports (facilitative influences) and barriers (obstacles)—that people anticipate will accompany their goal pursuit” (Lent, 2006, p. 18). Lent (2006) explains that these can be documented, such as parental income, or perceived aspects, such as accessibility of career role models or possibility of bias due to society created gender roles. SCCT is designed to “explain certain phenomena but not everything. Its purview centers on academic and vocational interest, choice content, performance, and, more recently, satisfaction outcomes” (Lent, 2006, p. 21).

In this study, SCCT is used to examine the African American male teachers’ choice in teaching as a career as opposed to testing a hypothesis. It allows for a deeper understanding of why they chose to enter this career and remain in the field or leave. African American males face many issues during their time in educational institutions and the educators in these institutions often are not representative of the African American population, particularly the African American male population. The shortage of African American male teachers is a very broad topic and many factors influence why this population chooses to enter the field. SCCT allows me to collect data that helps in a way of explaining this phenomenon that is currently occurring and to determine why these particular teachers have chosen to make a change against the African American male teacher shortage phenomenon. In doing so, themes emerge that allow me to consider potential ways to address recruitment and retention issues through the shared lived experiences of representative participants of this population.

Corbin (2009) explains that methodology is flexible and changes over time and with each researcher that implements it. She expresses that “these analytic techniques are just broad

guidelines that are used in very dynamic and flexible ways to stimulate the analysis” (p. 50). This approach to research,

Encourages researchers to enter the investigation with an open mind, ready to hear what participants are saying, and advocates letting the questions that emerge from analysis guide the next steps in data collection and analysis. It is a method that rejects a dogmatic and rigid approach to doing research and embraces taking the role of the other, giving voice to participants, all the while noting how the research him or herself is responding and shaping the research.” (Corbin, 2009, p. 51)

I transcribed the interviews and asked research participants follow-up questions to ensure that their voice is portrayed from their viewpoint and to offer them a chance to expand on ideas and information that is necessary in understanding the themes that emerged from the data. As an African American woman and former teacher, I realize that my presence does shape the research. It opens up a greater cultural understanding of some of the shared viewpoints and experiences, as such I ensure the participants that their voice is shared in a safe space. I then moved into coding after collection of the data, which entails “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data. Your codes show how you “select, separate, and sort data to begin an analytic accounting of them” (Charmaz, 2006, 43). During the initial stages of coding, Charmaz (2006) suggests that researchers use word by word, line by line, or incident by incident coding. For this research, line by line coding allowed me to “remain open to the data and to see the nuances in it” (Charmaz, 2006, 50). It provided a chance to gain a close look at the conversation between the participant and myself, as well as identify key statements that helped create codes, compare data, and better understand the

data overall in an effort to understand gaps. During the use of coding, in vivo codes were used to better understand participants' views and actions.

After initial coding, focused coding is conducted to “synthesize and explain larger segments of data” and to decide which of these codes make the “most analytic sense to categorize data inclusively and completely” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). I began with an exhaustive list that categorized what the teachers were saying and with this list it helped me to think about the major ideas that they chose to focus on. I then moved into axial coding. Axial coding “relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data you have fractured during initial coding to give coherence to the emerging analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). Theoretical coding allows researchers to move closer to their theory as it “specifies possible relationships between categories you have developed in your focused coding” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). The SCCT theory allowed for me to make sense of what was occurring in my data findings as I coded the data.

Additionally, Charmaz (2006) suggests memo-writing between data collection and writing the final drafts of a paper. She explains that new ideas and insights arise during memo-writing and these ideas help to avoid forcing data into extant concepts and theories, keep involved in research and writing, spark ideas to check out in the field setting, and demonstrate connections between categories (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). There are different ways of memo-writing such as clustering and free-writing. These different types of memo-writing allowed me to note ideas, expressions, and possible reoccurring concepts as I engaged in the interview and as I went through the process of coding the data. While the participants shared their experiences I jotted notes in my notebook to help assist me later as I conceptualized what the participants were

discussing and created concepts and categories. I again engaged in memo-writing as I listened to the interview recordings multiple times and transcribed the data.

When concepts no longer reveal new theoretical insights the researcher is able to stop collection of data (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) refers to Glaser's (2001) view of saturated categories and explains that "it is the conceptualization of comparisons of these incidents which yield different properties of the pattern, until no new properties of the pattern emerge" (p. 113). As I collected the participant's lived experiences I focused on the quality of the interviews and the ways in which the information was able to provide a clear understanding of this phenomenon versus focusing on selecting a certain amount of participants. There is no certain number of participants to choose when engaging in a qualitative study due to the varying study designs, though suggestions have been made that vary (Guest et al., 2006; Fush & Ness, 2015).

Dey (1999) suggests,

To conclude research when there are no longer significant conceptual variations, a core category or main story line for the study is identified, an analysis is integrated around the framework, memos and coded data amplify and modify the resulting analysis, and an adequate theory has emerged. (p. 9)

Corbin (2009) explains that every research method is an interpretation of the method and so while particular guidelines are provided, it is a starting point for engaging in the method. Social cognitive career theory allowed me to view the participants' perspectives and by using this theory it focuses on the voices of those that are representative of the phenomenon as a way of explaining what is occurring.

### **Data Collection**

Beginning approximately January 1, 2016 recruitment of participants began. First, I contacted family and friends to tell them about my research study. I asked them to provide my contact information to African American male teachers that they knew of in Eythlyen. I had a phone or email conversation with participants to ensure they met the study criteria. Participants provided me with their gender, race, and current Eythlyen Public School (traditional and charter) that they work for. Second, I selected an hour time slot to interview participants, either in person or over the phone. The participants were identified and a consent form was mailed or emailed. Then the consent form was signed and returned prior to the interview. Interview times varied due to the depth of participants' responses. Using a semi-structured interview protocol, I conducted the interviews for approximately 1 to 2 hours. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or via phone (based on participant preference, schedule, and location). All interviews were conducted in a setting where the participant's privacy was protected. As I interviewed the participants I audio recorded and wrote down memo notes regarding our conversation and after the interview ended I wrote potential follow up questions to consider. If I wanted them to further explain additional questions, participants were emailed with follow up questions. Each participant was given a pseudonym and all identification information was masked, including the city and state of the research study. Interviews continued through May 2016 and were transcribed verbatim. Participation in this study was voluntary and if they chose not to participate I respected their wishes.

### Participant Overview

Name	School Type	Grade Level Taught	Age	Years of Teaching	Education Level
Arthur	Traditional Public School	High School	26	5	Master's Degree
Reggie	Traditional Public School	Middle School	30	6	Master's Degree
Andre	Traditional Public School	High School	33	5	Master's Degree
Derrick	Charter Public School	High School	33	3	Master's Degree
Jaylon	Traditional Public School	High School	42	15	Master's Degree
Micah	Traditional Public School	Elementary School	27	4	Master's Degree
James	Charter Public School	Elementary School	22	2	Master's Degree

### Researcher Positionality

Some challenges were present as I identified and interviewed African American male teachers for my research study, which made me reflect on my researcher positionality.

Muhammad, Wallerstein, Sussman, Avila, Belone, and Duran (2015) express researcher positionality as:

Both societal ascribed and achieved identities that confer status on an individual researcher, such as race/ethnicity, or level of education attained. It also encompasses the specific relationships between academics and community members, which are mediated by personal life experiences, motivations and connections; and extent of commitment and shared values. (p. 1051)

As an African American female I am able to relate to some of the barriers and experiences that relate to my racial identification, which is the same as my participants. Yet, still, I remained somewhat of an outsider as the African American male experience presents realities that I am unfamiliar with. As a resident of Eythlyen's suburbs, I had limited contact with teachers that work in this city. I was persistent in telling those around me about my study in hopes that they could refer me to others. Since I had no relationship with the participants prior to their acceptance of participating in this research study, some potential participants were hesitant to discuss their experiences. I contacted potential participants through phone and email, and some returned the message and some were unable to get back to me for various reasons. Yet, as I opened up to the participants about my background and what drew me to this study, they were more open to share their experiences with me. The participants decide how much to share based on how comfortable they were with me, but also some made it clear that due to the limited amount of African American male teachers in the city, they were somewhat nervous that others may identify them, if too many personal characteristics were shared.

I completely understood this and made it clear that their information would be kept confidential. Yet, as I reflect on the study, I am able to see how this presented a challenge with the data collected as the participants were selective in which parts of their journey to teaching they chose to share. Also, the teachers are really busy and stressed how much work they had to

do beyond the hours of teaching, and so their interview time with me was really appreciated but limited. At the same time, some teachers were unavailable for follow ups due to the many demands they were already juggling. Additionally, I had not considered the potential tensions that could arise from interviewing someone of the opposite sex. For instance, some of the male teachers were hesitant to share their age or the year they began teaching, yet eventually they all shared this. As I reached out to a particular participant, I had to have communication to set an interview and the actual interview to be streamlined through his wife. Due to my focus on my research study, I had not thought about how a significant other may feel about a female researcher, which is unknown to both the participant and participant's wife, contacting her husband. Also, some participants' may have chosen to potentially gloss over parts of their narratives, regarding the participants' youth or teaching career, in order to maintain a particular status. Nevertheless, other aspects of my identity continued to allow me to mitigate some of the challenges that occurred. I had a shared cultural understanding, similar education goals, was a prior teacher, and could relate to their concerns regarding the education of the African American youth in Eythlyen.

I do believe that the interviews had a feeling of closeness and rapport by the end of the interviews. As the interviews progressed and it was consistently a two way exchange of information, it allowed for some of the challenges to decrease and the participants shared more. If time was not a hindrance for the teachers, they would have continued to allow me to dig deeper into their stories and felt even more comfortable regarding what they can share. Yet, still what they shared provides a narrative to help all in understanding the perspectives, needs, and experiences of these African American male teachers.

### **Ethics**

I have attached the approval letter in the appendix. This study was approved by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board. All participants that agreed to an interview signed the consent form and pseudonyms were used to mask their identity, and school-state, city, and district.

### **Participant Selection /Recruitment Strategy**

This research study involves a specifically targeted population: current African American male Eythlyen Public School (traditional and charter) teachers. Consequently, all potential qualified participants identified between the time of the IRB approval and May 2016 who met the criteria were considered for inclusion. Robinson (2014) discusses Mason (2002), Trost (1986), and his own definition of purposive sampling strategies which includes,

Non-random ways of ensuring that particular categories of cases within a sampling universe are represented in the final sample of a project. The rationale for employing a purposive strategy is that the researcher assumes, based on their a-priori theoretical understanding of the topic being studied, that certain categories of individuals may have a unique, different or important perspective on the phenomenon in question and their presence in the sample should be ensured. (p. 32)

This method was utilized to recruit participants. Teachers, friends, coworkers, principals, and administrators made recommendations and none of the subjects are associated with me, the researcher. I contacted the prospective subjects by email and telephone and ensured that each person was a qualified representative of the population studied before chosen. The selection identification criteria include: African American, male, and currently a teacher for Eythlyen Public Schools (traditional and charter). Seven teachers were selected for the study.

### **Rationale of Participants and School District Selection**

This section describes the rationale for the selection of participants and Eythlyen Public School District. First, I describe the rationale for selecting the chosen research participants, second I describe the rationale for selecting the chosen school district, and lastly I provide a short overview of Eythlyen Public School's mission and vision.

The purpose of talking to African American male teachers is to identify and understand what led them to teaching and what has motivated them to remain in the field. Information regarding participants will not be disclosed and pseudonyms are used in the conference presentations, journal articles, and the dissertation. Participants were asked to discuss their life experiences as it relates to their education and career as a teacher. They were able to skip any questions that they chose not to answer and were able to end the interview at any time. No risk beyond what they encounter in daily life is anticipated. I masked each participant's name, school name and specific college major to maintain anonymity. Consent forms were given to all participants. The consent form contains information about the purpose of the research, the data collection, and dissemination. Participants were notified that they may withdraw from the interview process at any time.

These seven participants provided continuing patterns that helped in understanding the selected research questions. Seven participants were selected due to availability and willingness to interview, but also due to saturation, which Krathwohl (2004) explains as "new observations ceasing to add much to previous ones" (p. 260). African American males are represented at very low percentages in the teaching field and historically educational institutions have failed to meet the needs of many in this population. I targeted these participants to understand their journey and why they continued on in the field, despite the significantly low percentage of African American males in the profession. I chose to focus on Eythlyen public schools, because there is a higher

rate of African American males teaching in this urban inner city versus a suburban city. Research has shown that African American males typically teach in urban school districts and so this provided me the chance to have a greater population of potential research participants. Also, Eythlyen's public school district percentage of African American teachers, particularly males, is similar to many other urban inner city school districts across the United States.

Eythlyen Public School focuses on academic progress, financial stability, and integrity, and their mission is to "provide a high-quality public education for every child in every neighborhood, that prepares them for success in college, career, and community." Eythlyen's vision includes ensuring that students "understand diverse viewpoints and experiences that can equip students with the flexibility and creativity to adapt to a changing world." In regards to teachers, their vision focuses on: empowering teachers to lead their peers; creating quality professional learning for teachers and administrators; continuing to recruit talented teachers, especially to fill shortage areas such as special and bilingual education, and expand the racial and ethnic diversity of the workplace; and recruit, support, empower and retain exceptional principals to ensure the schools have strong and consistent leadership. Their vision to expand the racial and ethnic diversity in the workplace directly relates to this study as increasing the number of qualified African American male teachers is a necessity when considering diversity in the teaching field.

### **Description of Public Schools**

In this state, during 2015 there was a total of 129,668 full time teachers (76.8% female and 23.2% male, 3% not reported, 6.4% Black, .8% two or more races, .2% American Indian, 5.7% Hispanic, 82.5% White, 1.4% Asian, and .1% Pacific Islander). The percentage of full time teachers by race was relatively consistent, yet for Black teachers the percentage dropped from

9.2% in 2006 to 6.4% in this state during 2015. As is the case in all states, white teachers are the majority in this state, and the demographics of the teachers do not equal that of students. In Eythlyen, during 2015 there was a total of 22,559 full time teachers (76.2% female and 23.8% male, 4.5% not reported, 21.9% Black, 1.7% two or more races, .3% American Indian, 16.2% Hispanic, 51.5% White, 3.6% Asian, and .1% Pacific Islander). In Eythlyen public schools they have 379,833 enrolled students (9.5% White, 39.6% Black, 45.6% Hispanic, 3.6% Asian, 0.3% American Indian, 1.2% two or more races, and 0.2% Pacific Islander), 565 schools, a 17% student mobility rate, 89.6% of students are low-income, 77% graduation rate, 28% of students ready for college, and 25% of students passed the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (State Report Card 2014-2015).

### **Instrumentation**

I, the researcher, was the primary data collection instrument. I used a set of interview questions that are included in appendix A. The questions focused on teacher background, teacher experience, institution/context, retention, attrition, recruitment, and wrapped up with final thoughts about the shortage of African American male teachers in K-12 schools and Eythlyen public school district's effort to seek out African American male teachers. These questions were selected to provide an overview of the lived experiences of the interviewees and to understand how these experiences relate to understanding and addressing the current shortage of African American male teachers.

I audio-recorded the interviews for transcription. I used GarageBand on my Apple MacBook Pro computer and an iPad Voice Recorder to record the interviews. I also kept a small journal to take notes of the interview. I chose to use multiple forms to record the interview to ensure that I was able to capture everything the interviewee stated and to ensure no files were

accidentally deleted or not recorded. A pseudonym for each participant is used in all presentations or publications related to this study. I ensured that the data is accurate by working with the interviewees and asking them if the data I collected is an accurate reflection. I presented my written transcription and asked if this matched their intention. I asked participants if their answers were misinterpreted. Before I wrote the dissertation or reports, each participant was contacted. I ensured that their answers to the questions and my notes, from the interview, correctly portrayed their character. My notes were taken during the interview and they helped me pay careful attention to what was said and therefore I did not need to rely on memorization for particular statements or thoughts that occurred during the conversation. I met in person, call, or skype to show them the files of their recording and present my findings.

Next, I transcribed the dialogues a few days after the series of interviews and themes were highlighted and coded to represent various themes within the interviewees' transcriptions. I stored the digital audio files in a filing cabinet. It is only accessible to the researcher. The cabinet has a lock and only the researcher has a key to open it. No one else had access to it. The cabinet is off campus in a private residence. The data will be kept for five years. After the audio file was transcribed, the audio was deleted. I checked with participants to make sure I interpreted their conversation correctly. The audio recording and notes allowed me to review the conversation regularly as I worked towards creating themes and a greater understanding of this phenomenon. I was able to ensure that participants statements were exact wording and that participants were accurately represented. As I listened to the recording I had the opportunity to hear and focus on mixed conversational tones, word use, pauses, and such. The interviews were semi-structured and this provided the participants with a chance to speak freely about their experiences and to

focus in depth on the parts of their experiences that impacted their decision to enter and remain in the teaching field.

### **Trustworthiness of Findings**

Member checking is a way of ensuring credibility of information and it is a way of creating credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I informed research participants that I was open to all feedback regarding my interpretation of their interviews and through follow ups with the participants I was able to check with them to ensure their statements were presented correctly. The findings of this research study can be used to help understand other African American male teachers' experiences and as a way to inform future implementation of education policy, recruitment, and retention strategies. The participants lived experiences are unique to them, yet they shed light on the happenings of the population as a whole.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 presented information relating to the research design and methodology for this study. It included an overview of the theoretical framework, data collection, ethics, participants' selection/recruitment strategy, rationale of participants and school district selection, description of public schools, instrumentation, and trustworthiness of findings. Chapter 4 will focus on the participant profiles.

## CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The participants in my research study are all current teachers of K-12 public, charter and traditional, schools in this Midwest inner city, known in this study as Eythlyen. Each participant had such great information and vivid descriptions to share about their education, career goals, and current teaching career. These participant profiles serve as a tool of reference to greater understand the experience, backgrounds, personality characteristics, and much more about these African American male teachers. They share many similarities within their teaching experiences in Eythlyen public schools, and this helps to capture an individual image of who they are. Some participants chose to share more than others, so the profiles will present data that they were comfortable sharing.

My personal growth and the growth of my students was larger at my previous school and the reason why is when you are teaching in areas where students look like you and talk like you the level of impact is much greater if you stick it out. But you won't see the return on your investment for many years...four or five years than you see the lasting impact... for African American males, when we come into the classroom I think it is extremely important to come into areas that we are not in...I was the only African American male in science. –Arthur

Arthur, 26, was in his fifth year of teaching in one of the Eythlyen's many traditional public high schools. He gained his K-12 education in this city's public schools and saw it as a duty to give back to this city and his community. During his K-12 experiences, he never really had a connection with his teachers until high school. He expressed that he had many African American female teachers in his K-12 schools, yet few males. Yet, he passionately explained the deep connection that his African American science teacher had on his future selection of teaching as a career. Due to the teacher's deep care and passion for ensuring that Arthur successfully graduated high school and entered college with an understanding that a career provides the opportunity to make an impact on someone's life, he eventually realized that

teaching was the right career choice. His science teacher was not the determining factor for him to enter the profession, but he explained the teacher helped him along the way. The teacher was very structured, organized, strict, and very productive as he ensured his students learned.

The racial makeup of Arthur's K-12 schooling was almost 100% African American students during his K-6 and about 40% African American, 30% white, and 30% Hispanic or other races during the remaining of his secondary education. The racial makeup of teachers at his current school is a little less than 20% African Americans, and the rest are mostly white. He is one of three African American male teachers at the school. Arthur did not realize until after he gained his college degree that he wanted to teach. He then decided to do Teach for America (TFA), because he saw this as an opportunity to quickly enter the teaching field without adding years on to his education before being able to enter the classroom as a full time teacher. He had many ups and downs during his teaching trajectory, yet his students continued to motivate him to continue on with teaching.

Arthur began his teaching at an elementary school and is currently teaching high school at his alma mater with teachers that were once his teachers. His first couple of years teaching was rough as he had to teach and work on his masters at the same time. He expressed that he "fell out of love with Teach for America." As he moved forward in the TFA program he continuously felt the program was created for teachers that did not look like the students or come from the same backgrounds. This agrees with Amos (2010) whose research explained the lack of teacher preparation programs to prepare all teachers. Amos' research showed that the programs often focus on the needs of white teachers. The heavy focus on behavior management and low income families did not help him learn to become a better teacher, because he could already relate to the students from the communities that TFA prepared the teachers to teach in. Arthur did not feel

growth during the program and the conversations, in his opinion, were not productive for him. He ended up dropping out of the Teach for America program and his provisional teaching certification eventually ran out, so he had to leave the school he was teaching at. He did eventually obtain his certification through an education master's degree program and he enjoyed teaching at the high school even more so than the elementary.

The system was too overwhelming I had to teach too many subjects- social studies, science, writing 6-8. Writing, I just increased the rigor, I had to teach all three subjects for 6-8 and guided reading for my homeroom, 32 kids and 5 groups of 6 kids, 5 or 6 books I had to plan for. I was completely overwhelmed this was my fourth year teaching. There wasn't enough time in a week to complete all of the responsibilities that they asked of me and still be able to be a father and a husband or do anything in my life. I walked out of that job and I told myself I am going to be in the perfect setting for me which is a middle school subject when I only teach one subject and see them for an hour and they are gone. -Reggie

Reggie, 30, was in his sixth year of teaching in one of the Eythlyen's many traditional public middle schools, and had experience teaching in charter schools as well. He is one of the only African American male teachers at his school and one of two African American teachers, majority of the teachers at his school are white or Hispanic. He gained his K-12 education mostly in a small urban Midwest city, a couple of hours from Eythlyen. He moved quite a bit during his childhood, so he had experiences within this Midwest state and other states as well. As he reflected on his K-12 education, he explained his parents' divorce caused him to act out a lot in school and admits he was often in trouble with teachers. He was kicked out of schools for fighting, disrespectful to his teachers, often cursed at administrators, and considered himself a "terror in school." Despite all of this, Reggie would often excel in his classes and had the best of grades. He explained that his teachers never tried to have a relationship with him, and he decided to go into teaching due to "wanting to make a difference."

He acknowledges that his male family members were examples of “what not to be,” so this helped push him to gain a higher education. He is the youngest of five siblings and his nieces and nephews are just a few years younger than him. He often would teach his nieces and nephews and help them with their homework. His part time work experiences played a great role in preparing him to teach. He would spend time tutoring at schools, supervising recess, and volunteering with the youth. After graduating high school and entering college, these experiences helped lead him towards his studies and a career in education. He specifically wanted to teach middle school, because he remembers this as the most challenging part of his K-12 education. He wanted to be the support system that he wished he had when he was in school.

Nothing that the education system can remedy on its own it is a community issue a social economic issue. It stands beyond the power of the teacher and principal. I think that there needs to be more fluidity between the departments that handle different issues, the principals, the families, the whole family participation is very different from what it was once upon a time, it used to be a partnership. –Andre

Andre, 33, was in his fifth year teaching at a charter school in one of the Eythlyen’s many traditional public high schools. He is a product of this city’s public school system, yet never imagined that he would become a teacher. He studied biology in college and was determined to attend medical school and become a physician. When Andre graduated college he was not ready to immediately start medical school and had often been told that he had great qualities that lend themselves to teaching K-12 students. He decided to try it out and grew a deep passion for educating others, yet never let go of his passion for obtaining his medical degree. He believes that his mission is to “have a positive impact on his global community.” He gained his teaching degree through the Urban Teacher Preparatory (UTP) program. Andre’s first few years had a mixed staff of teachers, he said due to the usual makeup of the UTP program. Yet, his most recent school staff are majority African American. The students were mostly African American

in all of the schools that he has taught in, yet he pointed out that there were a few other minority students in the schools.

He credits his mother's extensive involvement in his K-16 education as key to his success. Andre and his mother graduated from a HBCU and he really emphasized the importance of understanding his and other's cultures. His mother remained consistent in involving herself in his schooling and spent much time attending his school activities or sporting events. Prior to teaching, he engaged in tutoring his peers and other students, both at the adult and youth level. As I was interviewing Andre, he expressed that he planned to leave the teaching profession very soon, possibly before the end of the school year. He felt very strongly about the many changes that are needed in order to recruit and retain African American male teachers into the teaching field and that schools do indeed push out great teachers.

Part of me I won't say I believe in conspiracy theory but I don't ignore them. They know I know the black people and culture. When you have people that don't know the culture you can tell them whatever. Then they do this, this, and this and they stressed because it doesn't work. But me, I'm like this shit ain't going to work. It is ridiculous. –Derrick

Derrick, 33, was in his third year of teaching at his second charter high school in Eythlyen. He attended a historically black college and gained a bachelor's degree in Mathematics and a master's degree in mathematics education. Derrick is a non-traditional student, and completed his bachelor's degree after eight years. He switched colleges during his undergraduate career, because he did not feel his college was adequately preparing him to succeed in the future. During this time, he engaged in many jobs that were in the education field, yet did not decide to go into teaching until after graduation. Derrick stressed the financial, emotional, and physical reliance he had on his brother, due to growing up in a fatherless home. He expressed that he only had one male African American teacher in his K-12 schooling, but this teacher did not have any significant connection with him. Derrick often would get in trouble during his K-12 schooling

and this continued into his college years. He explained many of those around him just wanted to “run the streets and thug, they did not want to be successful.”

His brother was already in the education field and had held many high level administrative positions, and encouraged Derrick to leave his current college to attend his brother’s HBCU alma mater. He did so, graduated, and a friend of his brother, who was currently a principal in one of Eythlyen’s public schools, encouraged Derrick to take a high school mathematics teaching position. He accepted, despite not having a teaching degree, and was placed on a contract that stated he must receive certification within his three years of teaching. While at this school it underwent the turnaround model and unfortunately the new administrators laid off every uncertified teacher. Derrick then had to then teach as a substitute as he worked on his master’s degree to obtain a teaching license. He loved teaching his students and felt like he was really making a difference in the students’ lives, yet due to the lack of agreeance regarding teachers’ expectations and students’ rules, he too expressed he would ultimately leave the teaching field. He was one of two African American male teachers at his school. Derrick’s school was almost half teachers that completed Teach for America and he felt that this created a space with teachers who lacked an education philosophy and sense of community with both the students and staff. Izadinia (2014) expresses the necessity of teachers to act as a learning community and to cultivate supportive and professional relationships with one another. Derrick explained that his school did not value this.

My opinion is that the charter schools were made to undermine and undercut public schools. There is a lot that the charter schools don’t have to do, so if you privatize where you can cut salaries almost in half you...I left charter in 2011 and went back to traditional public schools and it was at least a 30% increase in pay easy. –Jaylon

Jaylon, 42, was in his fifteenth year of teaching, currently at a traditional public high school in Eythlyen. He spent thirteen years teaching in the city’s traditional public schools and

two years teaching in charter schools. He expressed his lack of support for charter schools repeatedly and is a strong believer that they “were made to undermine and undercut public schools.” He reflected back on his K-12 schooling and during his seventh grade year he was always a classroom clown, yet his teachers enjoyed putting him in the front of the classroom. He said these same teachers often encouraged him to go into teaching, since he was so great at gaining the attention of his classmates and being in front of the class. He then met two African American mentors at church who both had doctorates in education and they too saw his leadership skills and encouraged him to enter the teaching field. His love for teaching was very clear and he explained that despite the “lack of instant gratification” his students encouraged him and he took pride in “shaping and molding the lives of young people.” Derrick’s experiences tutoring at a college in Eythlyen helped prepare him to take on teaching. He discusses instances of feeling that educational institutions too often take advantage of teachers, particularly African American male teachers. He considered leaving the education field temporarily due to the chaos he experienced working at a charter school, yet admitted he remained in the school because he was on the verge of planning a wedding. His negative experiences were not going to make him completely leave the teaching field, yet he notes that these experiences can easily make someone want to leave for good.

I’m supposed to be teaching music and this was when I didn’t really know the union rules and stuff and if I would have known the rules there would have been so many grievances, ...they gave us no help, what the assistant principal said is we don’t have time to train you but we are going to tell you how to do it...we are just building a car while driving. Yes, because that is safe building a car while driving. –Micah

Micah, 27, was in his fourth year of teaching at a traditional elementary public school in Eythlyen. He attended school in the suburbs of Eythlyen and expressed that his K-12 public schools had many similarities and struggles as that of Eythlyen, that he teaches in. The students

at his school are 60% Hispanic and 40% black. He expressed that there are a lot of language barriers between students and teachers in the school, particularly with the high number of students that do not speak English. He shared that the racial makeup of teachers at his school is mostly white, particularly females, and he is one of two African American teachers.

He has a bachelor's degree in music from an HBCU, a master's degree in urban education, and is currently working on a second master's degree in music education. His ultimate goal is to be a band director and he explained that he never thought about teaching until his high school band director began to play a father/mentor role in his life. Since he did not graduate with a teaching degree, he decided to enroll in the Academy for Urban School Leadership program. He speaks openly about not having resources, support, and proper skills from UTP to help him be successful in his teaching at all of his schools. He also expressed the high stress for teachers in his field due to budget cuts. Music programs/teachers are often the first laid off, he expressed. Only half of the public schools in Eythlyen have music programs, so job security was definitely an area of concern for him. He saw his role as more than just a teacher, but also as a father figure to many African American boys. He reflected back on the absence of his father and how an African American teacher is often able to help fill this void, somewhat as his band director did for him. He enjoys inspiring his students and they make him want to continue in the field as they show him he is needed.

I think teaching is considered a woman's field, there should be a balance, like it's a mother's job to raise a child, no it's a man's job as well. Society says why are you a teacher and in early elementary? Hopefully I get to the point where I am not the exception, oh how I heard this consistent theme... "It's so fortunate that you get to be in the classroom as a black male in early elementary." It's like a novel concept and it shouldn't be. It's so outside society's expectations. There is a sense of do you really belong here? -James

James, 22, was teaching at an elementary charter school in Eythlyen, and his school is in what is considered one of the worst parts of this city. This school has 90% African American teachers, mostly women teachers, and James is the only African American male. The students are majority African American. He grew up in the south suburbs of Eythlyen and attended Catholic school. Majority of his schools had a mostly African American student population, with high school being more racially diverse. James was able to have many diverse educational experiences during his K-12 education due to his mother's heavy involvement in his schooling and his participation in a high school program that incentivized good grades and strategic mentorship in return for free school tuition. James explained that his mentors in this program played a great role in his life and he continues to stay in touch with them even today. He stated, "My education experience wasn't a lot of instability, I was in the same place K-8, same classmates, pretty typical experience and one I did well with."

He pointed out that his mother was able to ensure his educational success, but many of his family members struggled in school due to instable lives that their parents and society provided for them. He explained that he often compared his schooling to his cousins and realized how the school system has let down so many African American students, particularly boys, and this made him want to "go in and make a difference in some kids lives." He is very into his Christian faith and politics. James has a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in education. He completed his teacher certification through the Teach for America program and was finishing his second year teaching. He explained that the longest anyone has stayed at his current school was a total of five years, and he planned to move to a new school the following school year. The high rates of poverty and crime near and within his school created a very stressful work environment, in addition to the school's low funding and consistent change of

administration and staff. He still wants to work in Eythlyen, but he expressed that he wants to take on a new opportunity in a less stressful environment.

### **Summary**

Chapter four discussed the participant's profiles. Seven participants were included in this study and each provided information that they felt was relative to their education and teaching experiences. All of the teachers work in schools that are heavily populated with students of color, mostly African American or Hispanic students. As they reflected on their K-12 experiences, very few recalled having an African American male teacher. If there was an African American male presence in their K-12 schooling, he was usually one of two or three total. As a current teacher, the participants see the same demographics in the schools they currently teach at. The impact of the teachers on the participants' choice to enter the teaching field varied among participants, yet many of the participants chose to enter teaching as an option after having finished college. Next, chapter five discusses the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the career choice for seven African American male teacher participants in this research study. It offers the participant's lived experiences as it relates to their personal, educational, and professional history. The experiences that are most highlighted feature key points that relate to their choice of entering the teaching field. The sources of data were collected through (1) 45-60 minute semi-structured interviews, (2) a review of documents and internet data that relate to the teacher's experiences, and (3) follow-up questions to interviewees to further expand on their initial interview and to check for my interpretation of their interview transcripts.

The interviews provided data that was coded for major themes. The themes chosen here present themes that were shared across the participant's responses. This includes: (1) The Barriers of African American Males Teachers, (2) African American Male Teachers and their Persistence in the Teaching Field, (3) The role of Mentorship and African American Male Presence, and (4) Strategic Recruitment and Retention Necessary to Attract and Keep African American Male Teachers. As stated in previous chapters, the main research questions are: What are the lived experiences of African American male teachers, as it relates to their education and teaching career?; and What do African Americans male teachers perceive as motivation for entering and remaining in the teaching field? The shortage of African American male teachers continues to decrease, particularly in Eythlyen. These research questions seek to understand, shed light on, and analyze how those that are already teachers can help all to better comprehend

what led them to this career, in hopes of recruiting and retaining other African American males into the field as well. This research provides an opportunity to further the research that is lacking in this area and promote policy and practice changes. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

### **Theme One: The Barriers of African American Males Teachers**

The teachers reflected on their upbringing and their experiences in educational institutions. During this time they discussed their family members, teachers, educators, mentors, and all that had an impact on their education. Reggie remembered that his teachers did not try to build a relationship with him. He added, “They didn’t like me and I didn’t like them either. I made teachers quit, it was pretty bad. Then one day I saw the opportunity to go to college, and so I saw it as a second chance. I saw that I wanted to be a teacher, and then I got the job.” Reggie is an example for young troubled boys. He is able to show the young boys how they can turn their lives around. Reggie explained how he almost followed the wrong crowd and the negative impact this would have placed on his life if he had.

Unlike Reggie, James expressed himself as an active student that was very attentive and respectful. His cousins attended a school right across the street from him and he felt that his school provided him with tools to be successful. He had a lot of programs and after school activities at school that helped push him towards college, so he did not get involved with some of the negative situations that his family members did. While he considered his schooling as good, he did not feel like the teachers really connected with him beyond one particular teacher that stood out. Jaylon reflected on his K-12 experiences and his seventh grade teacher stood out the most. As mentioned, she would let him crack jokes and lead the class. He saw how great he was at controlling the class and gaining students attention and this really gave him a platform to

explore his interest in teaching. Hearing the voices of representatives of the African American male teacher population is necessary when considering and understanding recommendations for attracting and retaining African American male teachers.

### **Having to Prove Yourself**

The teachers in Eythlyen consistently discussed issues with the need to prove themselves to teachers, administrators, and staff at their schools. Often times they expressed that they are not seen as equals to the teachers and staff that they work with. They are assumed to be unintelligent due to their racial (African American) and gender (male) characteristics. For instance,

I don't know if intentional or unintentional and I don't know if it is a challenge for black men or black teachers in general. The principals and administrators think that just because they are a white teacher they know more than a black teacher. –Jaylon

Jaylon talked quite a bit about how his ideas were often dismissed and even if a white teacher said the same thing as him, they would be praised instead of him. He was often challenged by other teachers, some with considerably less experience teaching than him. This did not make him feel good about teaching and he expressed how much it upset him. The sense of having to prove yourself is also seen in Mabokela and Madsen's (2007) study, which relates back to the many stereotypes that exist about African American males. Reggie, too, explained his struggles his first year teaching and credits the negative outlook teachers, administrators, and staff had of him due to his identity to this population. He said,

I actually did leave once, just the reason is, because the school I was at was telling me how horrible I was. I just had too much of a workload and so I stopped teaching and people really close to me convinced me that I should go back and not give up on teaching, but that school. I listened to them. It was just too much work to complete within a week. I never felt like there was enough time within 7 days to do what was required of me. –Reggie

Reggie absolutely loves his career as a teacher and his passion and dedication was easily seen through his expressions as he discussed his students and teaching during his interview. He

debated his worth in teaching for some time and wondered whether he was actually fit to be a teacher. Teaching is a highly stressful job and for many they can become overwhelmed with the workload that exists. Simon and Johnson's (2015) study showed the impact that work conditions have on a teacher's choice to leave the field. They discussed how leadership, relationships, and school culture all work together to create a sense of community for the teachers and students. Izadinia (2014) also focused on the necessity of community support and relationship building within a school, particularly in the teaching profession. Reggie had never taught prior to this school year, beyond student teaching, and the school lacked mentorship to help Reggie succeed at his full potential. Instead of addressing the root cause of Reggie's performance issues and exploring ways in which the school may have played a part in his issues, they assumed it was his fault and credited it to his lack of educational and professional knowledge.

There are not high rates of African American male teachers in public schools, Reggie's school particularly, and he expressed how this impacted his outlook on his potential capabilities in the education field. Thankfully, his family was a very strong support system for him and they were able to convince him to return to education and not allow others to determine his future. His passion for teaching could have easily been erased and incidents such as this are not isolated. Reggie continues to teach today and while he did discuss additional barriers, he was able to overcome the negativity and stereotypes experienced in the schools. Yet, when considering how to increase the representation of this population, key stakeholders have to have conversations and action plans to understand that this is occurring in order to think of ways to move forward. Of course, all schools will not have the same issues and some schools do ensure that they have resources to address equity issues and systems put into place to avoid this feeling of isolation and unworthiness. As mentioned earlier, Owen (2012) found that there was a cyclical avoidance of

discussing race in many schools because of the lack of diverse staff. If the topics are not discussed, the teachers have to continue to deal with these barriers or they may decide to leave the field, which will only increase the ongoing shortage of this population.

Regardless, many of the teachers interviewed discussed that they, too, had many moments in their career where they were made to feel “not enough,” isolated, and below their coworker’s education capacity, particularly in comparison to their white teachers and administrators. Reggie understood why he was struggling and his school could have worked harder to retain him and ensure that they do not continue to increase the shortage of the African American male population. Unfortunately, some have not realized that this is an issue and so they do not understand how fortunate they are to have diverse teachers within their schools. Szecsi and Spillman’s (2012) study mentioned that increasing teachers of color will increase multicultural knowledge for both teachers and students. Obtaining teachers into the field is the first step, but more has to be done to make them want to stay. Multicultural knowledge helps prepare the students for life beyond the classroom. The students will need to understand others and be able to process different perspectives, so diversifying the teacher population opens doors to begin these conversations within the schools.

Like Reggie, James too, expressed that he is made to feel as if he is not good enough as he stated,

Being a black man and always feeling like the underdog in life, people aren’t going to just give you stuff. They are asking can this guy do it? Is he smart enough to be a teacher? You aren’t going to find a lot of black males, so people look at you and how you dress, your style, always a sense of proving yourself. –James

James adds to the conversation that many judgments are used to process whether or not he or another African American male teacher is “good enough,” some of which have nothing to do with the education he earned. Brown (2012) acknowledged that this feeling of unworthiness

often appears as a topic of concern as African American males express their teaching narratives. He compares himself to the “underdog,” which expressed the feelings of being beneath someone and in this instance, he too, felt the white teachers and administrators at his school treated him as though he was beneath them. During his interview he shared how he was often questioned in a way that let him know many did not think he was smart enough to be a teacher. He had many prejudgments and factors such as his clothes, style, speech, and such that helped the other teachers, administrators, and staff determine whether he was indeed going to be accepted at that school as smart enough to teach his students, regardless of his earned degrees.

Jaylon shared, “The complaint I hear is they aren’t being respected, aren’t valued, and too many women run the school system. I will say there is a shortage of black men and a need of black men. There are no plans in place to keep black males in teaching because we are leaving at an alarming rate.” African American male teachers do not have many other teachers that look like them to consult with when they feel they are somewhat of an outsider, due to not fitting the stereotypical views of this population and they expressed that this would help. Many discussed the potential to attract and retain more African American males into the teaching field if they had a community of African American male teachers to talk to and simply know that they are not alone in experiences such as this.

Micah expressed frustration as he admitted how hard he had to work to obtain his bachelor and master’s degrees, yet the degrees are often dismissed by other staff in his school. When others see Micah, they see an African American male and do not know or even assume that there is the possibility that he is educated, which is interesting considering the highly selective requirements to gain a teaching license. He explained,

It is insulting! I’m like you know when I graduated and received my master’s degree, I had a weekend off and I was back in school getting another one. You don’t see that and

they don't know that, so they don't expect much from you. So yeah that is the biggest thing. -Micah

Some African American male teachers have chosen to pursue an alternative teaching license, because they were unsure of teaching as a career during their undergraduate career or they realized later in life their passion for teaching. Many of the teachers interviewed had multiple degrees and this showed their dedication to learning and gaining a higher education. Micah struggles with the realization that despite the national discourse regarding inclusivity and diversity in education, there continues to be a sense of acceptance mostly for young white females or any racial and gender demographic that is not an African American male. While many races are viewed below whites, the interviewees stressed how African American males in particular are placed at the lowest rank. Izadinia (2014) adds that negative self-views develop regarding teachers abilities and professional identities, yet though the teachers were highly upset about this, they still remained optimistic and knew they were capable of teaching. Micah continued to point out,

Well I'll tell you the truth with being an African American male teacher...nobody expects much from you at all. And I think it's just a stereotype of the black man. When someone sees a black male teacher they are like ohhhhh they don't expect much from you and when you do certain things it's like, oh wow! I'm like, well why wouldn't I? Why don't you think I am as good as Ms. Carmen is and I'm like is it because I am black? I can't say that, but umm I know that I feel like that is the reason...they I mean, of course it is a profession dominated by white females. -Micah

Micah explained that those who work with him at the school can make assumptions and question him regarding his education knowledge, yet he is unable to question them about why they feel this way about him. He is the minority in the school and does not have other African American male teachers who can help the other teachers in the building understand his view points. In many ways, Micah's voice is silenced as he has to keep his thoughts of unfairness and inequity to himself.

Professional development provides a space to engage teachers on topics relative to their work with students and in their general career. Most interviewees expressed the professional development at their schools lacked a focus on diversity or a platform to share their experiences. Amos (2010) focused on teacher candidates, yet they too experience some of the same issues as current teachers, in regards to lack of understanding or openness to understanding about race and ethnicity issues. She explains, “The participants' experience in the multicultural education class was in unison: they were shocked and frustrated to witness their White peers' insensitivity to the issue of race and ethnicity” (Amos, 2010, p. 32). While the current teachers are not as shocked, because they have continuously battled with this prior to and during their teaching, it still is unfortunate that this is a consistent issue. Brockenbrough (2012) discussed the consistent need for African American male teachers to dispel myths about their gender and race, as well as represent and defend their race as a whole. It is not Micah’s job or any of the African American male teacher’s job to educate their coworkers about diversity and equity issues. This is something that the school districts should include within their professional development and district meetings. What happens is that due to the lack of diversity in the meetings and within their professional development presenters, this is sometimes overlooked. If this outlook and feeling of isolation due to other teachers, administrators, and staff making the African American males feel inferior to them is not addressed, the shortage of this population will continue. Micah’s voice or any of the African American male teachers’ voices should not have to represent all African American male teachers when issues arise. Through educating all teachers, administrators, and staff regarding these issues it can direct teachers towards the realization that this is a problem and make them question whether they are helping or hindering the problem and consider action plans to move forward in solving it.

African American males realize they are not the majority, yet this should not equate to others assuming that African American males do not enter the field because they are educationally incapable. Micah is often assumed to be a gym teacher instead of a music teacher, and he expressed anger in this, as being placed in particular categories makes him feel that others believe he is not good enough for anything else. Chester compared this feeling of being beneath others in the workplace and educational institutions to any profession that is majority white and feels that as a black person “you have to prove that you are just as smart as the students that grew up in the more expensive suburban areas.” People that come from particular nicer suburban areas in Eythlyen are assumed to have received the best public and private education that the state has to offer and by default are considered smarter than others, particularly smarter than those that were raised in the inner city or high minority areas, according to some of the participant’s views. Harper and Davis (2012) share that

Despite their recognition of how schools, postsecondary institutions, and policies unfairly disadvantage them and others in their families and communities, the undergraduates upon whom this article is based maintained a firm belief in the liberating potential of education. (p. 116)

The participants realized the negative effects that the public schools have on the African American male youth. Jaylon acknowledged the continuing decrease in this city and expressed the potential reality that the city may not be able to gain any African American male teachers if no changes are made. He said,

I think we [African American males] want those positions, but we aren’t valued in them... I can only talk about Eythlyen, you have to go through professional development and seminars and I have been to hundreds and the number of black men are just dwindling and that is the trend. And in about five or ten years the only black men will be the principal or dean. –Jaylon

Teachers in Eythlyen tried to make sense of what is happening in the schools to continue to cause this significant decrease. Their personal stories showed that they are aware of many of the problems that exist and are often overlooked. The teachers' stories are brought together to gain a better understanding of their experiences and it is evident of the similarities that exist across the city regardless of teaching at a charter or traditional district school. Jaylon discussed both his experiences and friends of his that are African American male teachers in Eythlyen. He highlighted their issues that are similar to that of his and how it caused some of them to leave the education field or to leave their current school in seek of better opportunities for growth at another school.

### **Subjective Evaluation Systems**

When considering barriers that African American male teachers experience while teaching, it is necessary to think about the flaws that exists within the teaching evaluation systems. Evaluations are very subjective in nature and ultimately the administrators decide the future of their teachers. Andre and others expressed how this can present a barrier for African American males. As mentioned earlier, society has created stereotypes and assumptions about African American males and often assume that they did not receive an adequate education and are incapable of educating other students, especially in core subjects. Andre explained that he often felt his evaluators provided him inadequate evaluations and that the method used to evaluate him did not provide the opportunity for the evaluators to complete objective evaluations. He explained,

The evaluation system needs to be adjusted, it recently was, but is still not the best. There is literally a transcript of your lessons taken and observed, you are recorded and the critique can be very subjective. But I think if there was objective measures it would be better. I like objectivity. Unfortunately, evaluations are very subjective, which is troubling, because if you have an evaluator that has a personal issue, an administrator can

negatively impact your profession and people spend a lot of time, some five years for the degree. –Andre

Teacher evaluations are continuously revised and research shows that current methods are not the most reflective of a teacher's performance in the classroom. This subjectivity that exists regarding evaluations provided a sense of uncertainty for all teachers, particularly African American male teachers as they try to navigate cultural differences and potential subjective views.

Micah explained his uneasiness as administrators would enter his classroom at various random times to try and catch him doing something wrong, versus trying to uplift him in his profession. He explained,

A bunch of people would come in with clip boards and iPads, stand outside your classroom and have a meeting. So, I mean you get a lot of people coming in that weren't around and they would ask the kids, so what is the objective today. I got reprimanded today, because of some work on my board on the inside of the room. They came in with all this stuff and it makes you nervous! It's like I know what I am doing and then for them to have the little powwow outside my door after? So the only thing I got reprimanded on was the student work on my board, it was from two months ago. –Micah

As a new teacher Micah had received limited professional development and also was confused regarding union rules. He learned over time, yet he expressed that he could have had an easier transition into teaching had he told the union about inequitable incidents that occurred at his school. Micah was very confident in his ability to teach, yet administrators, both in the school and district created a culture that he expressed made teachers negatively question how well they were doing. Some of the practices that were followed did not help provide constructive criticism to ensure Micah improved and the criticisms that were provided were often subjective in nature. Simon and Johnson (2015) expressed that teachers appreciate positivity in school leadership and this was often not the case during Micah's experiences teaching. He continued to explain as he said,

I'm supposed to be teaching music, and this was when I didn't really know the union rules and stuff. If I would have known the rules there would have been so many grievances! They had me doing recess, then the principal gets upset the first week of school. "They are running you have to tell them they can't run at recess..." It's recess? So they finally took me off of recess duty and instead they had me doing the alternative reading program...they gave me no help! What the assistant principal said is "we don't have time to train you, but we are going to tell you how to do it...we are just building a car while driving." Yes, because that is safe building a car while driving! –Micah

Micah was told to teach this reading class and this was not a choice for him. His administrator required him to do this, yet he was not certified in reading. Additionally, his contract did not state that he had to teach a course beyond music. As a new teacher, Micah felt it was his duty to satisfy his administrator and he knew that this could affect his evaluations if he were to tell the administrator no. He showed much frustration about this. He was not trained at all by his school to teach this course and it was taking more time away from him planning his core subject taught, which is music classes.

Reggie had a similar situation and expressed that his school "was in a lot of chaos and disarray" and he stated, "Yeah, I had a coach, but I didn't have a coach." Again, these teachers felt that as a new teacher they needed more guidance to help ensure their success. Both had incidents occur that led to negative evaluations of their teaching performance, however, this was very subjective considering the lack of support that the school provided. Reggie notes that African American male teachers should be placed in good school systems with support systems in place to ensure that teachers are clear on expectations for evaluations and are evaluated by someone with an objective lens, especially their first few years. Derrick explained that while he loves data, "it is becoming too data driven and it is data overkill." Evaluations provide an overview of how a teacher is excelling, or not, in his/her teaching, but Derrick sees how the actual teaching is often overlooked and it becomes more about just having data to represent the teacher's performance versus ensuring successful teaching.

## Cultural Differences

Cultural differences within teacher populations in schools allows for a holistic understanding of others that are different from other teachers, students, and administrators. This provides an opportunity for students, teachers, staff, and administrators to learn about other cultures and gain alternative perspectives on ways of thinking. Yet, when teachers and administrators are not open to different perspectives this can cause challenges in understanding African American male teachers and students, in regards to their needs and views in the schools. Szecsi & Spillman (2012) explain that “a culturally responsive environment is expected in all classrooms and from all teachers, but minority teachers who have shared experiences with the students, both positive and negative, can bring a higher level of relevance to the classroom” (p. 24). Derrick expressed his anger with the teachers and administrators’ lack of cultural knowledge about the students that they teach. The students are often black or Hispanic populations in the inner city schools. Every teacher does not need to look like the student, yet they should have culturally relevant practices that they incorporate into the classrooms to ensure all of their student’s success. The presence of diverse groups of teachers at schools allows for conversations, actions, and negotiations regarding cultural topics. However, if administrators and “gatekeepers” are not open to new perspectives and culturally relevant ways of thinking, it can cause a silencing of voices even if diverse teachers in the schools do express themselves. Harper and Davis’ (2012) study acknowledges that “when provided a narrative space, Black men said they cared deeply about education. On the other hand, most believed that schools did not care about them” (p. 117). Derrick said,

Like I was saying the ones that are passionate, their passion is driven away because of all the problems I stated, giving the fake GPAs, knowing the culture is being set up for failure, knowing that they are not really set up for success, and just knowing they are retained or having to take high school level math classes again... 098 math in college, it

is embarrassing, and they want to pride themselves on 100% college acceptance rate, but the problem is the kids go to college, accumulate debt, and the next thing you know they come home because they can't keep the grades and they are telling everyone in the community that college isn't worth it. –Derrick

Derrick is aware of many institutionalized policies and practices that are in place in schools, many of which he did not agree with because they ultimately hinder African American males' educational growth. He described his observation of these unfair policies and practices and how they affect the youth. It really created a negative outlook on his views, and potentially other African American male teacher's views of the teaching profession. He expressed that the school he worked at was set up much like a jail and reinforced the school to prison pipeline, yet it did not do a good job in preparing the African American males for real world events that they would encounter while navigating the world. Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell (2011) acknowledges that African American male youth are at a serious educational disadvantage within the public school system. Understanding the culture of the youth and also how policies and practices affect particular cultures more than others is key when thinking about the educational success of the African American male population.

Students experience so many unfortunate events at such a young age, particularly in this inner city. Violence, crime, drugs, and such impact the students of these African American male teachers and as the teachers relate to the students, due to shared experiences or culturally relevant knowledge of the situations, it allowed for them to build a sense of community and they wanted to see positive change occur even more. National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (2004) express the higher academic, personal, and social impact that teachers of the same race as students have on them. James explained the closeness he feels to his African American students. Due to their matched racial and gender identification and him understanding the many obstacles, stereotypes, and negative discourse regarding African American males, he wanted to

see them succeed even more. Lewis (2006) emphasizes the need that African American male teachers have in wanting to help the youth. James explained the struggle his African American boys experienced as he stated,

You wouldn't want a five-year-old to go through what they had to go through... it made it difficult to see a kid struggle in the classroom and outside the classroom, it made it draining to see, especially my boys to see them have to repeat a grade, even at an early age seeing black boys getting in trouble and struggle with their behavior, it made last year a very testing experience. –James

The passion James has for his students is clear. As an elementary teacher he recognized a need to help change the outcomes of these students at an early age to prevent them from continuing to struggle in their later years. James understands the cultural issues that these boys face both in schools and in society every day. If he had not understood this he could have very easily assumed that it was just his students that struggle with the education system versus realizing that the public school system is not always equitable when providing the needs of students to reach their success. Parent engagement is also low in the high minority schools within this city and Reggie pointed out the need for African American male teachers to sometimes play a father figure or mentor role for African American boys. Next, we will discuss African American male teachers and their persistence in the teaching field.

### **Theme Two: African American Male Teachers and their Persistence in the Teaching Field**

African American male teachers all have different events and reasons regarding why they chose to enter and remain in the teaching field. However, many of their reasons overlapped and focused on the need to make a difference in children's lives, particularly African American male boys. The interviewees viewed themselves as necessary to show all that African American males can be successful in fields that are not typically considered a role for them. Brockenbrough (2012) discuss the necessity to begin discussing teaching as a career choice prior to college and

relationship building makes the teachers want to persist in the field. They have the chance to demonstrate to African American male students that they, too, can become a teacher. They are available as a resource to help the students process similar experiences relative to their gender, race, family, and society expectations, amongst other areas. Additionally, they have the opportunity to break the stereotypes of what it means to be an African American male teacher and display alternative perspectives through their interactions with students, parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and stakeholders in education.

Graham and Erwin's (2011) study explains that African American male students "perception of the teaching profession is shaped tremendously by their daily experiences with their teachers, staff, and school administrator" (p. 407). African American male teachers' presence allowed for the dispelling of myths that often times are not the least bit valid. As noted earlier, James is an elementary teacher. He originally did not want to teach elementary, but instead wanted to teach middle or high school. He realized how much of African American history is not discussed in the education curriculum and saw an opportunity to change this, if selected to teach history. He shared,

I definitely wanted to teach history and focus on African American history and American history and really focus on it from a different perspective and view. But I ended up teaching kindergarten and first grade, which is really different, but I have found it very rewarding and something that I wanted to stay with. –James

Elementary schools have a hard time hiring males to teach in their schools and hiring an African American male teacher is very rare. African American male teachers typically want to teach at high schools, if at all. Yet, James' interview was a good representation of how the initial objective he or any African American male teacher has for entering teaching can still occur at any of the grade levels. James' experiences teaching in elementary really made him aware of the necessity it is to have diverse teachers in the elementary classrooms and how non-existent

African American males are here. He realized that many questions and experiences that his students shared with him needed the perspective of an African American male or someone who was really aware of his culture. Also, his exposure to teaching at the elementary level allowed for him to see that this is something that he did actually enjoy. James continued and said,

My roommates and I do this work that we do because we want these kids to do well. We don't need 6 or 7 figures, but to contribute to the community, something that can make a positive difference. Showing them that if you aren't LeBron, you don't have to only be an entertainer. You can use your minds to do great things as well. –James

James realized that some of his students did not have influential successful African American males in their life and so knowing that he was making a difference and setting the standard high for his students really made him want to continue his work. Some of the teachers explained that due to stereotypes, many of their African American male students assume the key to success is having money and fame from entering some form of the entertainment industry, usually sports or music. James and the other teachers see it their duty to show these boys that their future careers are limitless, if they can focus and gain their needed education.

School culture plays a great role in African American males' decision to continue on teaching at any given school. Teachers and students both want to see their culture, ideas, interests and community valued and implemented in the learning and overall school culture. Andre expressed,

The place I spent the longest was the best, the principal was cool she promoted a family type cultural community and that trickled down to the staff. We worked together and shared resources. Example of it all starting at the top. –Andre

School leaders help set the foundation of the school culture and the teachers discussed how having a school culture that matched their needs and values helped them persist on in teaching. Most of the African American males had worked at multiple schools and discussed that the school they most appreciated had a family culture that was supportive of one another and

uplifting. Those that purposefully transferred schools, admitted it was because the culture was set up for them to fail and did not add value to their teaching or overall personal education mission.

Jaylon expressed,

Uh, so I started teaching in 2000 I would still be at the same school I was at had it not closed down. My school shutting down is the only reason I left that school. I had no reason to leave... literally brick by brick shut it down and they rebuilt it two years later. I couldn't wait. Had that school not shut down, I would've been there. -Jaylon

Jaylon's passion for education, teaching, and engaging in building a community within the school was evident as he discussed his seven years at this school. Jaylon talked about the culture and how everyone that worked in the school was like a family. There was more diversity across teacher's age, gender, and race at this school and he expressed the levels in which the teachers and administrators really supported each other. Goings and Bianco's (2016) research focused on African American high school students and their decision to consider teaching as a career. They explain:

Although the young men believed teachers of color had limited influence on their desire to enter the teaching profession because they were so few and far between, the young men articulated that having teachers of color generally, and Black male teachers specifically was important to them. (Goings & Bianco, 2016, p. 642)

Students pick up on the limited racial diversity that exists in the schools and they make sense of why this is occurring. The students, in Goings and Bianco's study, explain the negativity that exists around the teaching profession and how other careers are more valued. The culture of the schools really played a great role in how the students viewed teaching in their study and ultimately it played a great role in this study as participants mentioned similar views.

As mentioned, inner city schools often have, for instance, high rates of minority students, issues of poverty, and crime. Derrick explained how these issues made him feel closer with his

students, because he could relate from his experiences of the same issues during his childhood and teenage years. He explained,

I have good relationships with my students. I am from the hood just like them and that is what they need. If education paid better people wouldn't mind teaching. I am saying pay, because I am having to swallow my pride. –Derrick

Hanushek (2007) discusses the need to increase salaries to retain teachers. Derrick's personal connections that he has with students helps him persist in teaching and he feels that other African American males would enter the profession if the pay were to change, because they do want to build relationships with the African American boys and be the support system and voice for them that is lacking in many schools. He feels that as a teacher that comes from the same type of environment he can relate much more than some of the other teachers. His presence in the school allowed for teachers to have a reference when they had obstacles with students and are unable to relate due to racial, gender, and cultural differences.

Micah added that the lack of active fathers in many of the African American boy's lives plays a great role in him persisting to teach. He sees himself and other African American males as the ultimate resource for each other. He, and most of the teachers interviewed, did not grow up with fathers or their parents divorced and so they were raised primarily by their mothers. Micah stated, "We know, like most of us, many people I know grew up without a father, young black boys grew up without a father." While this is obviously not the case for all African American boys, this narrative is often persistent in inner cities, like this city, Eythlyen, studied. Teachers are not required to play the father role, yet those that are really passionate about their students and realize the gaps that exists, due to the young boys not having fathers, created more of a reason for these teachers to continue teaching and to continue making a difference in their

student's lives. Next, we will discuss the role of mentorship and African American male presence when choosing a career.

### **Theme Three: The Role of Mentorship and African American Male Presence**

#### **African American Male Mentorship**

Mentorship plays a great role in students' selection of a career. As they see, for instance, friends, parents, family, community, and church members engage in different careers, it helps lead them towards a career that fits their interests. Irvine (1989) states:

Mentors are advocate teachers who help black students manipulate the school's culture, which is often contradictory and antithetical to their own. They serve as the voice for black students when communicating with fellow teachers and administrators; when providing information about opportunities for advancement and enrichment; and when serving as counselors, advisors, and parent figures. (p. 53)

Mentors obviously come from multiple backgrounds, but teachers of color, in this case African American male teachers, can potentially help mentor African American youth due to related experiences, such as understanding "Black children's language, style of presentation, community values, traditions, rituals, legends, myths, history, symbols, and norms" (Irvine, 1989, p. 53).

Micah praised his high school band teacher for helping him make changes in his education career and eventually choosing teaching as a career. When asked about mentors that he has and how they have played a role in his life or career choices, he immediately was excited as he reflected back on the many moments that he shared with his band teacher.

He discussed a particular moment in his high school career when he was having difficulty at home and his mother was unsure what to do. Micah, too, did not have his father in his life and his mother felt he needed some male guidance, so she asked his band teacher to talk

to him. He expressed how his band director turned into someone whose footsteps he wanted to follow into. Micah stated,

He pulled me into his office to give me a talk, because I was disrespecting my mom. He gave me that talk like a father-son talk. I ran out that office so fast, because I didn't want him to see me crying and not because he yelled. I'm like this guy took time out his day to tell me this he could've been doing anything. I guess my mom called or something and from then I just drew closer to him and I just wanted to be that. –Micah

This experience he had is one that Micah wants to share with his students and agrees with Brockenbrough (2012) regarding the affect that mentor-mentee relationships have on career choice. He felt how passionate his teacher was in making sure he had a connection with his students beyond the classroom. He knew that his teacher cared about him and Micah wanted a male figure to fill the gap that was missing due to the lack of a father figure. He continued to explain the teachings that his band director taught him and how this helped develop him into the man and teacher he is today.

Reggie said, "Most of the males in my family were examples of what not to be. I recognized that at a young age." Reggie's community was very urban and many did not finish school, let alone try to achieve success through a higher education. The struggle of both family members and his community helped push him towards achieving success. He wanted to be a resource to those who did not have positive African American male figures in their life. Jaylon also had teachers that motivated him and two mentors that had doctorates of education. Jaylon explained that they "took him under their wings" and they expressed the need for his leadership in education. Derrick, too, explained that "seeing other black men doing well for themselves within the education field" helped motivate him to know he can succeed in this field and have a meaningful life from it. Derrick expressed,

I did city year it is like an educational volunteer community service type thing. You really don't get paid you just get a stipend. I really didn't want to do that, but he [brother]

motivated me to do that. You go into the school system in Philadelphia. It is an AmeriCorps, program they provide in class support to schools. The schools pay for it, but the people that do it are volunteers. We would come in provide in-class support programs build play grounds, dedicated to do 17 months. As a 19yr old you are like uhhh, but it created networks and connections that I use to this day and it is well over ten years ago. A collection of doing that and watching my brother in his career in education and being successful all those played a role and seeing the need in urban communities. I was able to relate to them. –Derrick

Derrick also mentioned a science and math program that he completed in high school. The program director was very influential to him. He explained this man spoke well, yet was a “street cat and wore baggy clothes and Timberland shoes.” He felt this African American man always knew everything there was to know about science and math, and so this taught him that being smart was actually somewhat cool. He admits that he still got in trouble after. However, this man did help make a difference as he reflects back about those who mentored him and individuals that helped in his educational growth in some way.

Derrick faced barriers as a new teacher due to the lack of guidance his school and mentor provided him as a first year teacher. He recognized that as smart as he was, he needed help to grow and succeed in teaching. Yet, his mentor was unable to give him proper advice and guidance due to taking on a student teacher and many other responsibilities. The teachers made it clear that the mentorship received during their K-12 education was really influential in regards to their current accomplishments. Typically, new teachers are provided a mentor, yet the teachers in this study, who mentioned their mentors, did not have much guidance from their assigned mentor.

### **Being there for the Black Boys**

I may come in when kids aren't used to seeing an African American male in an authoritative respected figure role. If they are receiving instructions from him, maybe this conflicts with what they may get at home. So black males may have that additional challenge where black female teachers may not. -Andre

Disciplinary issues with African American male students is a great issue of concern and much research has been done to show the overrepresentation of this population that is disciplined, usually unfairly. Andre agreed that the high representation of this group was unfair, yet he also felt enough is not done to help ensure that the students stay out of trouble and continue on with their education. Andre explained, "African American male issues need to be addressed much earlier, because they fall off into things like jail and poverty. You are not going to see them in college." Andre raised a great point. An increase of African American male teachers will not occur, if as students they are continuously dropping out or being pushed out of school and ending up in jail or in situations of poverty that prevent them from attending college. Bennett, McWhorter, and Kuykendall (2006) suggest that the lack of teachers of color may have an impact on low high school completion rates students of color. As mentioned earlier, African American male teachers often have higher expectations regarding academics for students that look like them (NCDTF, 2004).

Micah experienced behavior problems with his African American male students, yet he chose to build relationships to try to motivate them to change versus using discipline procedures that did not help promote growth within the student. He feels that more African American male teachers are needed, so that they can begin to have people within the schools that are able to relate to this population of students and can understand other methods to help encourage a change within these students. Douglas, Lewis, Henderson, Scott, and Garrison-Wade's (2008) recognize that African Americans are sometimes viewed from a deficit lens due to cultural misunderstandings. Brockenbrough (2015) expresses that in his study three men "critiqued the disproportionate responsibility that they seemed to carry as Black male teachers who could successfully handle student misconduct" (p. 512). While the participants realize the great help

they are as they work to understand the students' backgrounds and cultures, they realize that this should not fall solely on them. Micah expressed the multiple roles he has to play as an African American male teaching African American boys,

The major problems that I have are usually from the black boys and then when I talk to parents, I'm talking to moms, because dad isn't there. I don't think they [African American males] know that them not having a dad at home, at least if there is a black male in school it will kind of fill that void. I don't think they realize how important it is to have them in schools and umm teaching is a female dominated job. I just think they don't know how valuable they will be at a school. -Micah

Micah wants African American males to see the difference that they can make in student's lives, particularly those that are African American males and growing up without male influences in their lives. The teachers cannot replace the fathers, but can serve as a resource to help meet these student's needs and to educate other teachers about what those needs are and how best to support them.

Andre showed frustration as he came to the realization that teachers, administrators, and staff viewed African American male teachers as the prominent person to solve discipline and management issues in the schools versus a key person in their content area. Reggie explained a similar example,

There was no curriculum so I struggled a lot the first year. The class was so tough that I felt like they only hired me at that time because of my management. Not because I was the best teacher. They knew of all the candidates they had I would be the best management. They said let's hire him, so he can manage the class. -Reggie

This view of African American male teachers as the disciplinarian for students, especially young African American students is often the narrative that exists. This goes back to African American male teachers having to prove themselves, because, as stated in the literature review, they are cast into this particular role of disciplinarian and their knowledge of their content area is overlooked.

The teachers expressed how making relationships and really trying to understand student's cultural backgrounds made a great difference in behavior. Szecsi & Spillman (2012) express, "A goal is to have more role models with varied ethnic backgrounds, so students will be able to see appropriate teacher roles" (p. 26). All teachers have to put forth this effort and not expect to rely on particular colleagues that are of the same race as the child to handle discipline, especially considering there is often not an African American male teacher present in the school. What often happens is discipline issues for African American boys increase, even when the behavior problems, if any at all, can be easily mediated. Handling discipline issues can be tricky and schools question the best methods. Andre shed light on the lack of discipline at his school. Due to the overrepresentation of African American students disciplined, some schools have made efforts to decrease this number. Andre struggled at his school as they attempted to decrease students disciplined by not allowing the teachers to discipline the students at all. Andre explained their use of restorative justice, yet he did not feel it was implemented well and the students took advantage of having no consequences. Andre explained,

If an adult were to allow their human traits to show, in a moment an adult is fired. If students continue to show their disrespect and insubordination continues, they are still around after countless infractions. Can't send troubled kids back to the classroom and tell the teacher to just deal with it. Can only suspend for ten days missed after that they reached a maximum for the year. Those disciplinary things need to be changed. –Andre

He is aware of cultural issues and is able to relate to his students, but he believes that he knows when the students are using restorative justice for their benefit versus actually learning from their mistakes and attempting to make better choices. He struggled with trying to teach students in his class and having particular students in his class continuously being disruptive. This was a barrier for him in his teaching, because the administration was not supportive of him when he wanted extra assistance beyond the practices that were implemented. The National Education

Association (2011) reports that African American boys are struggling on many points of the academic continuum, such as: attending under-resourced and poorly performing schools, they are three times more likely to be expelled from school in comparison to their white peers, black and Hispanic males constitute 80% of special education students, 2.5% less likely to be enrolled in gifted and talented classes, and black males are 20% of all students in the U.S. labeled as mentally retarded, amongst other data presented (p. 1). The presence and committed actions of African American male teachers in the schools can help shed light on and begin to ensure that these issues are addressed.

Jaylon has been teaching for fifteen years and has seen African American male teachers enter and exit this career for a multitude of reasons. It is not enough to recruit the teachers, we have to ensure that they have reasons to stay beyond their commitment to the students. Jaylon said,

I would say a lot of men that I speak to say they want to mentor young African American males you know and some African American females, but for the most part that mentor type role. But if you have a discipline like oh I have to teach this math. The frustration, especially if you teach in an area that is stressful. There is a lot of issues that happen at home that you have no control over, so a lot of the brothers go in wanting to be a mentor but discipline makes them say I need to leave and create a mentor program... how to deal with conflict, being professional. –Jaylon

Mentorship, he explained, was a large factor in many of the men's, which he knew, reasons for teaching and sometimes they found that the classroom was not always the best way to reach this population. He passionately said, "We have the knowledge and expertise, but we get the pushback so we either stay in the classroom or we go do something with the gift that we have to do well." Unfortunately, this adds to the shortage of the population in this field.

### **Cultural Differences**

It is important to reiterate that this study did not seek to express that the recruitment and retention of African American male teachers will change the diversity issues in schools. African American male presence and presence of other diverse populations allows for all school staff and students to interact and learn from a representative/s of the population. Villegas, Strom, and Lucas (2012) further explain this as they state,

The presence of teachers of color alone is not sufficient to improve the education of students of color. While the life experiences and insights of people from racial/ethnic minority groups can make them an asset to the teaching profession, it is likely that such a resource will have little payoff unless teachers of color are prepared to draw on those experiences in their work with students of color. (p. 288)

If someone from multiple diverse populations is not represented, then the school staff is not able to gain real world experiences and understanding of the students represented in their class, particularly in diverse school settings. At the same time, teachers of color that are in the school have to be willing to share and shed light on their experiences, because it is not enough to just physically be there. Of course, if these diverse populations are not available, then the school has to be very strategic in how they go about being inclusive and implementing equitable policies and practices that benefit all students. Derrick explained,

Teachers from those same economic backgrounds are beneficial in a classroom, because they can relate to our kids-section 8 housing, link card, Medicaid, parents don't work or one parent works all the time, fathers are in jail for murder, some haven't met them... - Derrick

Derrick pointed out throughout his interview the many ways in which he was able to connect to his students due to his similar background experiences, such as sharing stories, providing advice, and referring students to resources. Additionally, he was able to share his experiences with other teachers and administrators, so if they had a student and were unsure about how to handle

particular situations they at least had a resource to go to. This is not to say that Derrick needed to be the key source of information regarding African American students, instances of community violence, growing up in a fatherless home and such, because that can become very taxing on Derrick. However, through conversations and through learning about Derrick, other teachers were able to understand some of what the students were faced with, if they had not had similar experiences.

McGrady and Reynolds (2013), too, see the benefits of African American male teachers in the classroom, because within their study racial bias was sometimes evident of teachers who did not look the same as the students. As stated earlier, Derrick continued to explain how he is tired of educational institutions not meeting the needs of African American boys as he said,

It is like being there knowing how passionate I am about the black community watching this miseducation, lack of education, improper lack of understanding of the black community and the world, it's just it hurts. It is disturbing and it hurts to take a part of it. I am adding to the destruction that I don't believe in, which is why I am leaving. Another thing is I was kind of strict and stern. They want you to give warning after warning... I'm like you have black boys getting shot. They can't see it like that, ain't no warning. –  
Derrick

Derrick worried that the education system would not prepare African American boys for the tough reality of the world. The institutionalized policies and practices, in his mind, were setting the students up for failure and he questioned his existence in education. He admitted that he wanted to consider alternative routes that would let him guide and mentor young African American male students without having to be a teacher. In his opinion, he was doing a disservice to his students, because he had a limited voice at the school. He wanted to make changes and ensure that the school was preparing them for the real world, yet he explained that his practices were often shut down.

James explained how he saw it as a duty to be there for his African American male students due to the current low representation of this population. James said,

I know there isn't a lot of black male teachers, I take it really serious. I try to help out and build some kind of relationships, regardless if they have a dad or not. I just remember growing up and not seeing a black male teacher. They are growing up in a tough time, well it has always been a tough time, but there is a lot out there, setting them up to fail and I just want to be someone that can make a positive influence. –James

James' students open up to him and look to him for guidance. He expressed how amazed he was at the personal stories and information that his elementary students would reveal to him. They saw that he cared about what goes on with them beyond the classroom walls and he was a resource for them. Students shared with him about violence in their home, jail time that a parent—usually the father was serving, and many other personal events. James said he would have never thought to tell his teachers these personal experiences in school. Reggie, too, expressed the need to fill multiple roles as an African American male teacher. He knows that he cannot literally be a father for the boys that are growing up with no father figure, but he tries to fill this gap when needed. He stated, “So I am the only father figure they have and so they need us to teach them and model specific behavior for them and you have to wear many hats as a male teacher. Even the parents expect us to teach their kids to be men.” Reggie continued and said,

I knew that coming in with the job, but it is asking a lot you want me to teach your kids not only science and math, but to tie a tie and hold the door for ladies and why is it important to let the ladies drink first or open the door or why is it important that the ladies don't have to put the chairs up at the end of the day, but the guys have to. –Reggie

While Reggie acknowledges the necessity of his presence in school, he realizes that in addition to increasing the diversity of teachers, societal issues need to also be addressed. There are limited male teachers, in general, and so the males that are in the building do have to take on more responsibility of ensuring that their male students learn everyday skills and responsibilities for men. Of course, not all teachers will go above and beyond to meet this need that does not have to

do with academics, but in inner cities Reggie understands how necessary it is to teach more than just the education content in the classroom.

Arthur also sees the great need to go beyond just teaching students. His students describe him as “a concerned teacher, somebody that is a holistic educator, a teacher that doesn’t care about grades, but instead cares about how his students are socially, academically, and emotionally.” Arthur socialized with his students to gain feedback regarding his performance as a teacher. He wanted to know his students’ thoughts of how he was fulfilling their needs and areas that he can work on. Before the school-year ended he had students write their comments on postcards and then he held a classroom discussion to record feedback. He saved these comments that students wrote and shared this during the interview. It was very evident that he has a positive image with his students. The students continued to mention that he “doesn’t yell, can relate, is engaged, creates fun projects, treats people like equals, aspires them, is respectful, and teaches life skills.” Of course, he wanted to hear negative aspects as well and so a few of these comments stated, “he has some favorites, his jokes aren’t that funny, and he didn’t stick with everything he said throughout the year.” All of the teachers saw the need to let students have a voice, to reflect on student’s needs beyond the classroom, and to sometimes play a greater role than the requirements of a teacher. Next, I will discuss strategic recruitment and retention that the participants felt was a necessity in order to attract and retain African American male teachers.

#### **Theme Four: Strategic Recruitment and Retention Necessary to Attract and Keep African American Male Teachers**

It is no secret that there is a shortage of teachers across the United States. Recruitment and retention efforts are needed to increase the number of all teachers to continue to provide quality and equitable education to students. Yet, the discourse on the teaching profession has

been negative in some aspects and it makes potential teachers question if they should enter the profession, considering the many other career opportunities available. Kearney (2008) stresses the many opportunities in corporate America and how teaching has to compete with these, especially considering the opportunities that teachers can do with their degree. As we consider how to recruit and retain teachers of this population, we first must understand their needs through the experiences they face as a teacher. James expressed,

Teachers are blamed for things, why would you want to go into a field where you are underpaid and not supported, and there is not a lot of males... One of the biggest things I am seeing is what I am making now compared to what I could be making. –James

It is a reality that many teachers are underpaid compared to the amount of work they do. The teaching field has to compete with other professions and Derrick even stated, “When you have some companies that are willing to pay you 55-70 thousand dollars straight out of college and schools want to pay you 30 thousand [dollars], well depending on where you are. It’s a hard decision.” Salary concerns was an issue for all of the interviewees and Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner (2007) express how lower salary was a top reason why teachers often left schools.

In addition to salary, teachers in Eythlyen have to worry about the high rate of school closings, especially in the arts. Jaylon said, “A lot of teachers panic you have to have your resume ready. You have to hustle. Schools are closing everywhere, teachers are losing their jobs who have been teaching 15-20 years and they cut you off and don’t want to give you a pension.” The fear of school closures really creates a sense of instability within the teaching market, particularly for African American males and teachers of color, because they teach in the inner city schools that are often closed down due to the school’s performance (Stoddard, 2005; Gilpin, 2010; Gritz & Theobald, 1996; Hanushek, 2007).

In Eythlyen, many of the interviewees expressed that the traditional public schools were much harder to gain a teaching position compared to the charter schools. Reggie expressed that you “have to know someone” and your certification is “just a piece of paper to them.” Not all teacher applicants know someone that is in the education system and so this places them at a disadvantage. Andre shared that he was able to begin teaching in the public school system quickly due to “word of mouth.” He began searching online for positions, but one of his friend’s parents is a teacher and placed him in touch with organizations that helped him gain entry into teaching in this city. He says that he was never contacted or recruited to teach in the city’s public schools. Woods (2016) suggests the benefits of alternative teacher certification as a method for recruiting more diverse applicant pool and decreasing the shortage of teachers. She explains,

To fast-track new teachers into the classroom, these programs often focus more on “on the job” training rather than theory. Participants frequently begin working in the classroom while completing their coursework—sometimes from the very beginning of the program—rather than in the last year of a traditional program. (p. 2)

Alternative teacher certification does help to increase the opportunity for individuals to enter the teaching profession, yet the participants expressed that often times teachers from these programs would not last long.

James explained that his school has consistent turnover and no one at the school has been there longer than five years. He was not even sure about teaching until he began an alternative teacher education program. He explained the Teach for America process as he stated:

I thought I wanted to go to law school and a political career. I didn’t start off college to become a teacher, it was junior year that I started going through the process. One thing I like about TFA is they go into low income communities and try to make a difference, instead of going into suburbs. They try to be a factor in low income neighborhoods. I thought for sure I was going to Detroit to teach, because there was a high need...TFA allows you to go into these situations and help, it’s not the end all, but a factor in the

movement in the education and inequality. So that was how I started that process of wanting to be a teacher. –James

Teach for America gains many students who are not in the education field or who do not plan to remain in the education field more than two years or so. TFA receives backlash consistently due to the high turnover rates of their teachers, which are situated in urban inner city communities, like Eythlyen. Alternative programs do, however, attract more minority and male recruits (Woods, 2016). James discussed that he did not feel the TFA program adequately prepared any of the teachers to teach in these high need urban areas and so they did not last as long. Yet, he appreciated that it gave individuals, like him, who are committed to making changes in education a chance to gain an alternative teacher certification. James explained,

They try to focus on behavior management. I think the objective standpoint, first year in any profession it definitely was a culture shock, just dealing with some of the things I saw and it was a lot to go through. Unfortunately, a lot of people have left in my year or the year under me. It is a hectic situation and you look at these schools and you think why are these schools open? The fact is, they are not really serving kids and so I know we just had a shut-down of about 50 schools in the city, but it's like what is really going on to make these schools so ineffective in this city? –James

In his opinion, TFA focused so heavily on trying to learn how to handle behavior issues in the classroom that everything else in regards to teaching was glossed over. He felt they were teaching the TFA teachers how to handle the students, but not adequately teach them.

The training was not culturally relevant and the teachers in the program often did not look like the students they were going to teach, and many did not experience some of the hardships that would arise with their students throughout the school-year. James said, “I wouldn't say TFA prepared straight out of college grads for their first year teaching.” James enjoyed the opportunity to reach young African American males, which his urban school placement setting provided him through TFA. Yet, he did not think TFA provided him the tools

he needed to be successful. He focused more so on his knowledge from his past experiences as an African American male student.

Reggie believes that the teachers need hands on experiences prior to teaching to ensure they are ready for the classroom. His after school work with an education tutoring program and supervising recess for a few years really allowed for him to have first-hand experience with engaging and building relationships with young students prior to finishing his undergraduate career in education. He shares, “A lot of students not having the classroom experiences was their downfall. A lot of teachers teach or enter schools for the first time a year before their actual teaching.” Reggie continued and said,

Have a support system in place. There are a lot of administrators that fail to do this for first year teachers. They give them a hundred new things to try to implement, implement this and that... Just give them one at a time to focus on, so they can do that well and then move on to the next. So definitely the first year you should get a lot of coaching and teaching and if it's not from administration pair them with a mentor or a seasoned teacher. –Reggie

Reggie wanted more guidance his first couple of years and he noticed that this is necessary for all teachers, especially teachers of color, if we want to retain them. Reggie's transition to this city was not the easiest due to the high gang violence that exists. He began his student teaching in the city prior to accepting his first teaching position in Eythlyen. Reggie explained his negative experience in this city as he said,

The college owns a house in the inner city, and it's in a heavily gang populated area [primarily Mexican]. So I moved out there and being an African American in that community, I experienced a lot of hardships. My car was broken into, house broken into, sprayed stuff on my car... Finally, they stole the car, I gave up on it and moved out of the community. The university sends their students there that want to teach in the inner city. Great experience, but tough neighborhood. I had to worry about gang violence or being associated with gangs. They didn't prepare us for that. No training that prepared for this. My first time coming to this city was to student teach. –Reggie

Reggie had worked in other urban communities, but they were not as large as this city and they did not have as much violence. Depending on the person placed in this situation, they could have easily chosen to give up on teaching or their student teaching experience and so Reggie acknowledged that issues such as this need to be addressed. The housing set up by the university was free, so the students chose to live there because they had limited financial support. When thinking about recruitment and retention, it is necessary to consider how external and internal factors play a role in African American male choices to enter and remain in this field.

Finally, listening to the African American male teachers' views and experiences is a starting point for truly understanding what this population needs. As mentioned, so many factors play a role in their ultimate decision yet, the participants show the need for increasing their representation in this field. As they reveal their personal accomplishments and struggles as they gain their education and remain in the teaching field, it is clear that as an African American male there are similarities among the group. Some programs and initiatives are in place to start addressing this issue, so the participants' findings help us see that we need to continue to place emphasis on their need in the field.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the findings from the research study. It included common themes that were presented within the responses of the participants, which include: the barriers of African American Male teachers; African American male teachers and their persistence in the teaching field; the role of mentorship and African American male presence; and strategic recruitment and retention necessary to attract and keep African American male teachers. Chapter six includes an analysis of the findings and how Social Cognitive Career Theory helps in understanding these findings.

## CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter analyzes the findings presented in Chapter 5. It relates the findings with past literature and continues to use Social Cognitive Career Theory to make sense of the findings. This study was designed to examine the lived experiences of African American male teachers as it relates to their education and teaching experiences in Eythlyen's public schools. In doing so, it considers ways to address the current shortage of this population in the teaching field by encouraging changes in recruitment and retention avenues, some suggested through this research study. All of the teachers teach in Eythlyen, which is a large urban city with high rates of minority students in its school districts. Minority populations are expected to almost double in the next forty years according to Lichter (2013) and the "United States is expected to become a major-minority nation" (Bocanegra, Gubi, & Cappaeart, 2016, p. 241). Bocanegra et al. (2016) acknowledge the decreasing rates of white students in public schools, and agree that "in urban schools, minority students are a clear majority" (p. 242).

The African American male teachers all shed light on the high rates of racial diversity with students in their schools, yet as this increases the racial makeup of the teachers remains the same. This large growing contrast between teachers and students causes "cultural mismatch" (Quioco & Rios, 2000; Torres et al., 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2004; Zumwalt & Craig, 2000; Bocanegra et al., 2016) and this study begins to explore the racial mismatch that exists between students and teachers, which relates to cultural understanding of their students. The findings presented themes that include: the barriers of African American male teachers; African American male teachers and their persistence in the teaching field; the role of mentorship and African American male presence; and strategic recruitment and retention necessary to attract and keep African American male teachers. The findings are analyzed using the Social Cognitive Career

Theory. Social Cognitive Career Theory is a framework that was created to explain career and academic interest, choice, and performance (Bocanegra et al., p. 243). This study focuses on key constructs of SCCT that help create an understanding of career choice for the African American male teacher participants, which include: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, goals, and interests.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is known for predicting and explaining academic and career related choices and performances (Hackett & Betz, 1981; Hackett & Lent, 1992; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Sadri & Robertson, 1993). The participants' self-efficacy levels, in relation to their career choice, varied in the study, particularly as they navigated the education system as a student and as a teacher. As a student, for example, Jaylon was the only teacher who explained his high self-efficacy in relation to the teaching career. The others never believed that this would be something that they would do in the future, until particular opportunities and activities, after their K-12 education, provided them an avenue to realize their potential in the career. Self-efficacy is seen as a “dynamic set of beliefs that are specific to particular performance domains and that interact complexly with other personal, behavior, and contextual factors” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 83). Jaylon's teacher would let him guide his class and he spent a lot of time engaging his peers in his classroom during his youth. This helped heighten his self-efficacy, as he saw himself as capable and having the ability to teach.

Even though self-efficacy makes predictions about individual's abilities, it only suggests relations with objective skills, it does not guarantee objectively assessed skills (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1986). It focuses on whether or not an individual believes that they can do something. Four primary information sources of self-

efficacy include: personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997; Lent & Brown, 2006). Personal accomplishments are the top influence on self-efficacy, yet all choices depends on how the individual “attends to, remembers, and interprets” (Lent & Brown, 2006) their informational sources. For the other six teachers that had not considered teaching as a future career, during their youth, they had personal accomplishments during college and after that helped guide them towards teaching. For instance, for James, people around him suggested that he become a teacher. His accomplishments teaching in the Teach for America program and his masters of education program helped increase his self-efficacy in this career. He began to see that the students excelled as a result of his teaching and he enjoyed the connections that he made with his students. He would consistently get positive feedback from students and, as SCCT and social cognitive theory explain, this heightened self-efficacy led him to remaining in the teaching field. James had issues with the program framework in the Teach for America program, yet he persisted on to gain his master of education degree to ensure he could earn his teaching license. He could have interpreted this “informational source” as a sign that he was not made to be a teacher, yet he persisted.

Lent and Brown (2016) explain that to understand SCCT “include *content or task-specific self-efficacy*, referring to beliefs in one’s ability to perform the specific tasks required to succeed within a given domain under normative conditions, and *coping efficacy*, or beliefs in one’s ability” (p. 16). As I processed and coded the participant’s responses, Reggie in particular decided to go into teaching because of his success during his work with after school education programs and his experiences helping the youth in the community. His career self-efficacy continued to grow and he excelled in his teacher education program. Yet, as a new teacher he

questioned whether or not he was good enough to be a teacher due to negative feedback from administrators and the fact that he never felt he was able to accomplish everything that was asked of him. Yet, as he struggled to cope with the demands of his teaching career, he decided to temporarily leave the field. He admits that he doubted himself. When making career decisions, using job search strategies, managing multiple work roles or role conflicts, “*process efficacy*, or perceived ability to manage generic tasks necessary for career preparation, entry, adjustment, or change across diverse occupational paths” (Lent, 2006, p. 16) impact career decision, as we see occurred with James. Yet, during his time away from teaching, he talked to others and they encouraged him and he began to motivate himself to realize he can succeed in teaching and it was the school, not him, that was failing to meet his needs. He took his time off to reflect on his teaching and to figure out ways to move beyond his barriers, which SCCT considers “*self-regulatory efficacy*, or perceived ability to guide and motivate oneself to perform self-enhancing behaviors, such as studying, despite deterring conditions” (Lent & Brown, 2006, p. 16). Understanding the types of self-efficacy helps in analyzing the teachers thought process and decisions making that occurred due to their lived experiences. Self-regulatory efficacy was necessary for all the teachers as they ultimately had to push themselves to continue teaching, regardless of the barriers that were present, if they wanted to continue in the career.

### **Outcome Expectations**

When considering outcome expectations of the participants, SCCT takes into account people’s reactions to what they think they can do and what will happen if they do it. Types of outcome expectations include: anticipation of physical, social, and self-evaluative (Bandura, 1986; Lent et al., 1994). Self-efficacy often influences career decisions more as people often “avoid actions if they doubt their capabilities” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 84). Society has created an

image of what a teacher looks like and this image usually is a white female teacher. Since African American males are underrepresented in this field it causes others to question their worth as a teacher and from the participants responses it was clear that this impacted their thoughts about the teaching career. Teachers often work long hours and the participants expressed the great amount of time that is taken away from their families to focus on teaching, grading, and supporting students and the school. Bandura (1986) agrees that self-efficacy and outcome expectations both help in understanding individual's career choices, and while self-efficacy usually plays a greater role in decision, at times when quality is not taken into account as much-outcome expectations may play a greater role.

Society, family, friends, community members, teachers, and many others helped the participants decide on their path to teaching as a career. Some of the teachers were unsure which career path they wanted to take when they graduated high school as well as college; therefore, after college graduation five teachers chose to engage in an alternative teacher preparation program after assessing their qualities and the high demand for teachers of color in the field. Many alternative programs require a certain expectation for the teachers to teach a certain amount of years after finishing the student teaching component of their program, such as Teach for America's two year commitment. Most of the teachers, except for James, surpassed their time commitment to teach and they processed the outcome expectations if they stay or leave the field. James was finishing his second year of Teach for America and so he, too, was deciding on his next steps. He wanted to remain in the teaching field, yet he wanted to work at a new school in Eythlyen. For a couple of the teachers this is an ongoing process, and for others they knew they wanted to remain in the field.

SCCT reminds us that the participants question what will happen if they stay in their career, in this case the teaching field. Their responses showed that they were consistently navigating this. The teachers faced barriers, such as proving themselves, that made them wonder what the future holds for them in the teaching profession. Two participants admitted that they wanted to leave the field. They realized that their contribution and capabilities can be used in other careers, while still meeting their overarching goals. Goals were a major concern for the teachers as they had expectations regarding their future and the best way to meet those expectations they set for themselves. SCCT sees taking goals into consideration as a necessity when implementing this theory.

### **Goals and Interests**

Goals play a role in “regulation of behavior” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 84). Bandura (1986) explains goals as choosing to include oneself in certain events or to create a certain outcome in the future. Even though all of the participants were current teachers, they discussed their dreams and goals, which required some of them to eventually leave the teaching profession. Derrick loved teaching, but his main passion consisted of mentoring the youth and being a change agent in the African American community. He saw teaching as an avenue to start creating change, yet realized during his career that as an African American male teacher he was limited in the change that he could create within the schools. As he reflected on his goals and how to reach them, he explained that he would soon have to leave the teaching field.

Andre entered teaching knowing that his ultimate goal was to become a physician. His five years of teaching allowed him to fulfill his personal goals of being a positive impact on the youth in his community, yet his long term career goals could not be achieved if he continued to teach. He planned to go to medical school and begin his journey of impacting others through the

medical route instead of K-12 teaching. Lent et al. (1994) explain this moment as "self-satisfaction to goal fulfillment and to the enactment of behavior that meets internally-set standards" (p. 85). SCCT explains that goals may change over time as individual's decide what will most satisfy them in their life and through experiences the teachers are able to sort out what their goals are and how best to achieve them. The older the participants were the more sense of understanding they had about what their goals are. For instance, Jaylon was 42 and even though he had some dislikes with his teaching career, he knew that this career was the best way to meet his goals and was able to easily state that he would not leave the profession. Derrick was 33 and he was very direct about planning to leave the teaching profession to ensure that his goals were met. He analyzed where he was in life and understood that a switch in career would be necessary if he were to focus on his end goals. Andre, who was also 33, as we mentioned had a goal of becoming a physician and so while he enjoyed teaching science classes, he was very direct in saying he, too, would have to leave the field soon. The other teachers were unsure of their plans as educators. Some expressed potentially becoming a principal, band director, department chair, or exploring other avenues outside of the education field. Since some of the teachers were newer in the field, they expressed the endless possibilities and how they are learning more about themselves and the outcome they want for themselves as they continue to teach.

Despite enjoying teaching and being successful at it, SCCT points out the need to want this as part of your career goals in order to remain in the field. Career goals have often been referred to as "occupational aspirations or daydreams when they are assessed remotely in time from actual career entry, do not demand commitment or carry real consequences, and do not require subjects to factor in reality considerations, such as job market conditions" (Lent et al., 1994, p. 85). SCCT focuses on two particular goals and these include choice content goals and

performance goals. Choice content goals refer to “the type of activity domain one wishes to pursue” and performance goals relate to “the level or quality of performance toward which one aspires within a given domain” (Lent & Brown, 2006, p. 17). As we see with Jaylon, Derrick, and Andre, their performance goals were high as they expressed their knowledge in their content area and how this translated to student performance, in addition to their relationship building with students that provided them a platform to make a difference in the students’ lives. The teaching career was their initial choice goal, but as they developed a greater understanding of their needs, interests, and impact that they want to have on their community and the world, their choice goals changed.

Each of the teachers had a high interest, “people’s pattern of likes, dislikes, and indifferences regarding different activities,” (Lent & Brown, 2006, p. 18) in teaching. They all described their passion for educating others, being a resource for African American male students, helping other teachers, administrators, and staff understand the African American male perspective and culture, love for the content they teach, and overall happiness to help in diversifying the teacher workforce. Some of their dislikes such as salary, lack of respect about their level of content knowledge, subjective evaluations, and lack of equitable practices and policies for students, amongst others, helped the participants decide whether teaching is something they can continue to do forever or for a period of time.

When considering whether the participants or any other African American males will enter and remain in the teaching field, Lent and Brown (2006) discuss the role contextual and environmental supports and barriers play in SCCT and this relates to the entry and exit of these participants. The higher the support and the less barriers, the greater the chance of the teachers entering and remaining in the field. All of the teachers mentioned the lack of effective

mentorship their first couple of years teaching and within the first 3-5 years teachers often make their decision regarding staying or leaving the profession. When the teachers entered the profession they had an idea of what to expect, yet while actually teaching this was not always the case. Having a supportive school staff that works together and helps each other when barriers arise was a necessity and a key topic of discussion for the teachers.

### **Career Barriers, Persistence, Mentorship, and Recruitment and Retention**

K-12 education experiences set the stage for the participant's relationship with educational institutions and their role as an African American male student. All of the teachers expressed that they did very well in school in regards to their grades. Yet, for some of the participants, their lack of connection with teachers really impacted their behavior in the classroom, the way they viewed education, and their future careers. Only two of the seven participants had a particular teacher that really encouraged them in their education pursuits and made them want to go into the field. This encouragement was through the teacher's actions, not through suggesting teaching as a potential career. Only one teacher, Jaylon, had a teacher that at least introduced him to the possibility of teaching as a career. The rest of the participants had explored the idea of teaching as a career amongst other careers, if they explored it at all.

Many of the teacher's reflections on their K-12 experiences focused on what they were going through in their personal lives, more so than in the actual classroom. There was a very evident disconnect with the participants and the schools they attended. They seemed to see the school as a necessity to get them to the next step of their life, but not as a part of their community. Extra-curricular activities, such as sports, band, and clubs were mentioned as places that helped create a sense of relation to the school. However, the actual learning in class did not seem to create a space for valuing the individual differences of students and celebration of their

diverse races and cultures. Individuals learn possible career choices throughout their youth experiences within the environments they engage with (Lent et al., 1994). All of the participants attended schools that were majority African American students, majority African American and Latino students, or racially diverse schools. Only one participant had a racially mixed group of teachers, the others had a majority white female staff of teachers when they were students. SCCT's focus on outcome expectations again takes into account what people think they can do and what will happen if they do. Here the participants' view of the teaching career is possibly altered based on their vision of who can be a teacher.

High school is a key time in career decisions and “career theorists highlight adolescence as a pivotal developmental period in the exploration and formation of potential career objectives” (Gushue, Scanlan, Pantzer, Clarke, 2006, p. 19). Their experiences and views of teachers began the introduction to participants regarding what it means to be a teacher and what are appropriate roles for their gender and race. Gushue et al. (2006) express the necessity for “teachers and counselors to gain an understanding of students’ self-efficacy regarding specific career exploration activities and career education aimed at helping students to identify their interests and gain an understanding of the world of work” (p. 21). This SCCT perspective enhances students’ self-efficacy as they are able to consider potential careers and the requirements to enter careers, such as teaching, at an early age. African American youth, as are many youth of color, are faced with challenges during the career planning process; limited financial resources within their homes, schools, and communities; and discrimination based on their racial and gender identity (Kenny, Blustein, Chaves, Grossman, & Gallagher, 2003; Gushue et al., 2006). The participants each had their own personal challenges, yet still all of these factors affected their career choice in some way.

As mentioned, all but one of the participants stated they did not have a father in their household growing up. The mothers that were mentioned were shown as involved in wanting to see their sons succeed in school. The mother's involvement was at very different capacities, because of education level, profession, time commitments, and such, so some mothers attended field trips, sporting events, and volunteered in the classroom whereas others just encouraged their sons to do the best they can in school. The participants' description of their mothers as "hardworking," "caring," "involved," "educated," and "willing" really helped them want to do more for themselves, yet most admitted that this was just the initial drive and more was needed from the school staff and outsiders, which ultimately was their mentors. The communities that the participants were raised in, most in Eythlyen, presented opportunities for them to easily get off course and some did for a short period of time. During their youth they all consistently navigated what it meant to be African American and male, as well as what were the outcomes of those that were from this population. Family members, community members, friends, and acquaintances all helped the participants construct in their mind different avenues that they could choose for their life. This helped boost the SCCT construct of self-efficacy as the teachers were able to believe in their ability to succeed in any given profession. The participants' age ranges from early twenties to early forties, yet their stories of their childhoods relate to African American males growing up today in urban areas, since many of the same issues are occurring.

Research continues to show their struggle to survive their environments, society's expectations and stereotypes, poverty, crime and violence, premature death, and educational systems that were not created for their success (Bateman & Kennedy, 1997). Villegas & Clewell (1998) discuss the "inadequate education many students of color receive in elementary and secondary schools, which limits the number who are eligible to go on to higher education in

general and into teacher education programs in particular” (p. 122). This research agrees as the participants all acknowledged how the school system failed their family and friends, particularly those that were the same race and gender as them, yet for them they figured out ways to navigate it and/or had assistance along the way to keep them on their path of gaining a higher education. For the participants it seemed that their K-12 experiences provided an avenue for them to understand the many events, both positive and negative, that their students face or will face in the future. These experiences, which again, ranged from being a class clown to get attention, going to jail for crimes, disrespecting teachers and their mother to excelling in sports and not receiving scholarships, mentoring other younger youth, and finding education programs that promoted high education achievement, all helped them form into the teacher they are today. SCCT is concerned with relatively dynamic and situation-specific aspects of people (e.g., self-views, future expectations) and their environments. (Lent & Brown, 2006, p. 13). The way the participants’ saw themselves, their interpretations of others around them, and their community again played a role in how they teach and why they teach.

College for many of the participants was a time of finding themselves and only two of the five teachers, Jaylon and Reggie, decided to take on teacher education as their major. These two expressed the lack of diversity in their teaching programs and consistent lack of African American male representation. Reggie in particular, decided to leave his first college because he did not feel the college was adequately preparing him to teach. In his view the college he graduated from helped prepare him more, but still for him there was many struggles along the way. The participants shared, from their experience, teacher education programs and alternative teacher education programs both focus on preparing white female teachers to go into the classrooms. Reggie expressed that he often felt alone in his program, but he had his mind set on

his goals so he pushed himself to continue, which again is seen in SCCT as a necessity as the participant works towards his outcome expectations. Jaylon strived in his teacher education program and as he pushed through he reminded himself that he was returning to his community to make a difference in student's lives.

The other five participants each completed an alternative teacher education program after their undergraduate career. These alternative teacher education programs tend to attract higher representations of diverse groups and address teacher shortages and Woods (2016) explains that "these programs are less selective than traditional programs and attract a broader pool of applicants" (p. 1). The programs often target hard to staff schools, which usually have higher rates of minority students and teachers. It is often a topic of concern as to whether or not the teachers from alternative teacher programs remain in the field, yet I'd argue that understanding their experience in the field is beneficial to ensure that we can retain them by making efforts to meet their needs.

Particular barriers made navigating educational institutions and the teaching career challenging. There are many barriers that exist in relation to the teaching profession, yet the participants consistently highlighted the particular barriers that are represented in this study. Swanson, Daniels, and Tokar (1996) view barriers as "external conditions or internal states that make career progress difficult," "yet it can be overcome" (p. 237). In thinking about barriers that the African American male teachers faced within this study they had barriers that were both in their control and out of their control. The barriers could be overcome if changes are made in society, educational institutions, and in policy and practices. Lent and Brown (2006) discuss SCCT and state, "It is assumed that people are prone to attempt behaviors they see as likely to gain them highly valued outcomes and to avoid behaviors that may result in particularly adverse

consequences” (p. 17). The teachers expressed for instance, having to prove themselves to other teachers, administrators, staff, and sometimes even students. Society has created an image of what it means to be African American and a male. This often times relates to images that are not inclusive and African American male as a teacher or educator is often not discussed or acknowledged as a fitting profession for this population. The participants all continue to navigate and try to understand why they had to prove themselves in their career and their white colleagues did not. They all were easily able to make sense of why this is happening. Society expectations, stereotypes, lack of African American males in the field, not considering African American males as intelligent, and many other responses all helped the participants make sense of the unfair judgments and environmental and societal barriers that exist and affect them.

Regardless of degrees held, years teaching, and type of education earned, African American males are still often first acknowledged by their gender and race while in educational institutions. The teachers discussed their K-12 education experiences and their teaching experiences and many of these experiences mirror each other. African American males are not assumed to be smart and capable of learning at high levels or educating others. Due to reasons such as the overrepresentation of this population that has disciplinary issues and high rates in special education, the African American males are grouped and stereotyped, regardless of individual characteristics. The teachers’ responses made it clear that these negative views continues to be a barrier for African American males in other career roles where this population is represented at really low rates. As James discussed with me his need to prove himself, he had flashbacks of moments that this occurred and how unfair it is, and how in many ways it was out of his control. He knew that everything he did was placed in context, by other teachers and

administrators' views at his school, of what is expected of African American males versus what he was able to do as an educated college and graduate school graduate in the education field.

This reality of having to prove yourself, when you have already completed the same teaching requirements as the other teachers, which makes you a candidate to teach, is something that as African American male teachers they have limited control over. Even when they expressed concerns to colleagues regarding matters such as this, because they are not the majority or even well represented in their schools, it made it difficult to begin to address the underlying stereotypes, society, and career issues that exist for this population. From a SCCT perspective, people lean towards careers that they see themselves having a positive effect (Bandura, 1986; Lent, Larkin, & Brown, 1989; Lent et al., 1994). This can cause issues as we begin to think of recruitment and retention, because if the teachers are too often made to feel as an outsider or not valued in the profession, they may not decide to enter it. Also, if current teachers express their negative experiences in the profession with other potential students or candidates, this can sway them from the profession. Graham and Erwin's (2011) research adds to this as their findings explain that African American boys were mainly not interested in this career due to the negative perceptions of teachers and teaching.

Milner's (2012) study addresses negative perceptions about black teachers and their teaching. His use of counter-narrative shows the need for African American teachers' stories to be heard. Even though he focuses on both female and male, it is evident that there are negative perceptions held about this race and if the stories are not shared they will be overlooked. African American male teachers, in particular, have a unique story that captures their need to go beyond society expectations and to be a resource for all to understand that these perceptions of them are inaccurate or not relative to the population as a whole. While research does discuss issues faced

by teachers, heavy emphasis has not been made on the needs and experiences of African American male teachers, such as for these teachers to prove themselves throughout their career. This of course is one amongst many of their barriers, yet I'd argue that it is a very distinct one. It was often discussed in the participants' responses and surfaced throughout literature on the topic, in addition to the other barriers and experiences mentioned.

Subjective evaluations can also be detrimental to this population as it has the potential to prevent the African American male teachers from advancing within their teaching career. States, districts, and schools have focused on developing, piloting, or implementing a teacher evaluation system. Many views exist regarding what is the best teacher evaluation system, yet with any of the systems we have to decide which evaluation system provide less administrator subjectivity. Teacher evaluations rely heavily on classroom observations, lesson plans, students' work, and other relevant materials related to the teachers' teaching. These evaluations are conducted by school administrators, yet these evaluations can be problematic as administrators ultimately have the chance to make very subjective evaluations of teachers. This evaluation impacts teachers' future employment and this was of great concern for the participants. Again, in the SCCT construct, outcome expectations play a great role in the teachers' decision to stay in the field. They need to be able to see positive outcomes in their future, as it relates to their career and goals.

In Eythlyen, the participants could not help but notice that they were held to different standards as white teachers, their overall missions and implementation of school practices and policies may not have aligned with that of administrators, and the administrators may have had personal issues with the specific teacher, all of which potentially leads to subjective evaluations. The difference in standards that these teachers faced, according to them, were mostly due to

lower expectations automatically assumed about the performance of these participants due to their representation as African American and male. The participants may not receive high scores, because administrators may assume regardless of what is presented by the teacher, that the teacher is incapable of receiving the highest remark.

A teacher evaluation report was published in January of 2016 and it presented findings related to teacher evaluations in the city of Eythlyen. Key findings in this report by Jiang and Spote (2016), relative to this study, include: minority teachers have lower observation scores than white teachers; male teachers have lower observation and value-added scores than female teachers; schools serving the most disadvantaged students have an overrepresentation of teachers with the lowest value-added and observation scores; observation scores have a stronger relationship with school characteristics than value-added scores; and teachers in schools with stronger organizational climates have higher evaluation scores (p. 2). The characteristics of the schools that the participants teach in are directly related to schools where teachers receive lower observation ratings. For instance, the report explained high poverty schools often had lower teacher observation scores and so did schools that lacked an effective organizational and learning climate. While subjective teacher evaluations are a barrier for all teachers, it particularly is heightened for teachers of color and even more so if they are male.

Some of the teachers expressed that they offered ideas, were open to sharing resources, and wanted the learning to be a two-way exchange between colleagues, yet, more often than not, they were dismissed in conversations. The city of Eythlyen is very diverse and the participants had similar shared experiences with the students, knew family members with similar experiences, or had self-knowledge or learned knowledge about culturally relevant information regarding their students' community. Due to this, some participants expressed that they

sometimes engaged in practices or policies slightly different than what the administrators may have liked or the administrators questioned the teachers' implementation of policy and practices. The teachers had a sense of how policies and practices work against the African American students, especially the males, and so as a representative of this population they saw it as a duty to ensure their students were able to succeed in the given environment and adjusted their teaching based on students' needs. Some teachers focus on just the content, but it was evident that the participants wanted to also prepare their students for life outside of the classroom.

All of the participants articulated very clearly their concerns for the many issues occurring in Eythlyen, yet as a minority it is more difficult to have a collective buy-in for creating change when the issue does not affect the majority. Therefore, the teachers admitted to some instances of tensions with administrators and this tension resulted in possible lower ratings on evaluations or heavy workloads given that did not allow the participants to function at their greatest ability. James was the only participant that worked at the same school his entire teaching career [second year in TFA program], so he did not compare the differences in teacher evaluations by schools. Yet, others shared the difference that it makes for teachers when all school staff work together and try to understand each other's perspectives in teaching, which is clear in Jiang and Spote's (2016) report. This support can lend itself to less subjective evaluations, because the administrators had taken time to really understand the teacher and his or her teaching, versus assuming based on outside factors and limited observation data. Micah even admitted his nervousness as the administrators would enter his room and evaluate him, because he knew they already expected him to not do well in his teaching. This uneasiness does not make teaching students a welcoming environment, let alone one that provides the teacher a chance to display their best efforts. Teacher evaluations are a time for the teachers to share their

knowledge, skills, and abilities and to ensure that they do so in a way that their students can comprehend and be able to apply this learned knowledge.

Creating a system that allows for more objectivity would benefit all teachers, particularly those of this population, since factors outside of their control are known to contribute to the way they are assessed. Jacob and Lefren (2008) discuss research regarding the weak relationship between subjective ratings and objective performance. Their research agrees with these findings and state that “supervisor evaluations are indeed often influenced by a number of nonperformance factors such as the age and gender of the supervisor and subordinate and the likability of the subordinate” (Jacob & Lefgren, 2008, p.104). As we consider retention efforts, policy and practices within the schools have to be addressed to ensure that they are equitable. If not, current African American male teachers, and other teachers, are provided a disservice.

The participants really voiced their appreciation for the African American community and how this changes their approach to teaching. Bias and discrimination due to cultural differences is something that continues to affect African American male teachers as they navigate how to express their personal identities in a space that was created mostly for white female teachers. Teachers, staff, and administrators cannot assume that what they have learned about other cultures is true for each individual that represents that culture. They have to be receptive to hearing others opinions and concerns; be willing to inform and educate themselves about other cultures through multiple education forms-especially those that have lived experiences and are open to sharing; and lastly be available as an ally and resource to the less represented cultures, so that they are not alone in trying to create change in their education institution. Villegas and Clewell’s (1998) research focuses on the need for diverse groups of teachers to ensure multiple perspectives. The presence

of these participants provides all access to understanding the views of African American males, yet individuals still have to realize that this view does not represent the race and gender as a whole.

Many education preparation programs, unfortunately, were designed for white English speakers and are not fully addressing the background and experiences of K-12 students or the teacher candidates (Montecinos, 1994; Murrell, 1991; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). As we consider the lack of teacher diversity or cultural understanding within teachers at schools, we have to also realize how the universities have played a part in this. Too often the teacher candidates are provided a class on diversity versus having this embedded in each class that they take. The participants explained that the same is true for professional development at their schools. The participants explained how this easily causes their colleagues to be misinformed about both the students they are teaching and the teachers that they work with. Reggie mentioned that the new teachers had a quick presentation on diversity when he first began teaching, but the school has not addressed it much more beyond that within their professional development. So, he too has a lack of professional development to help him greater understand issues of diversity and has to educate himself, yet not everyone is willing to do this.

The participants made it very obvious that they want to give back to their community and be a change agent in the lives of their student. In doing so, they have to know the community factors that impact their students' performance and be able to relate to their students in some way. Szecsi and Spillman (2012) explain that when minorities decide to go into teaching it is often so they can give back and this again was a key factor for the participants. They saw their presence as necessary, so that all students had a representation of a positive image of an African American male, particularly in the role as their teacher. Lent et al. (1994) explain that outcome expectations help determine self-efficacy and they affect activity goals through individuals'

interests, which as SCCT explains is sometimes guided by extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations helped the participants as they continue on with this profession.

Received mentorship was a motivating factor for all of the participants to enter the field and giving mentorship was a great reason why they remain in the field. Formal and informal mentorship was shown within the participants to have lasting impressions on their education and teaching career. Each participant had an African American male mentor/s that reached out to them and guided them during their K-12 schooling, college education, and/or teaching journey. These mentors ranged from brothers, community members, teachers, and church members, amongst others. African American male teachers have the opportunity to touch so many students' lives and to provide mentorship and guidance that is sometimes lacking for African American male youth. Mentors hold multiple roles and as the youth transition through the K-12 school system they will have experiences and need older role models that have experienced similar events in their life. Some of the participants mentioned how easily they could have followed in the wrong footsteps due to the environment in which they were raised. This is a sad reality for many African American male youth, particularly today as the youth are consistently shown in the news, for instance as victims of police brutality, dropping out of school, and participants in gang related activities.

Different programs exist within Eythlyen to help provide mentorship, such as Young Men of Color, Young Black Men of Honor, The African American Academic Network Peer Mentoring Program, and others. This mentorship provides students with financial literacy, goal setting, job interviewing skills, how to dress for success, and the value of education, amongst other topics. Most importantly, is their emphasis on topics that relate directly to the African

American and African American males' experiences. The Young Black Men of Honor mentoring program, for instance, provides students with coping skills for growing up without a father, which as all the participants expressed is a great issue for this population of students. The emphasis of having an African American male mentor is important as these mentors provide the students the opportunity to see strong, supportive, and successful men that encourage the youth to want and do better for themselves and their communities. As is seen with the participants in this study, the idea of creating impacting relationships to help change the discourse around what it means to be African American and male in urban communities is a necessity. The teacher shortage is continuing to grow and so as policy and practices are put in place to recruit and retain teachers, diversifying the teaching workforce needs to be a priority.

Job opportunities for people of color are continuing to expand. Irvine (1988) suggests that "teaching is no longer one of the few occupations that lead to middle-class status for blacks. Black students' role models are more likely to be business executives in Fortune 500 companies, not school teachers or principals" (p. 505). Role models and mentors come from all areas of students' lives, and teachers have the chance to make lasting impressions and provide guidance for so many students' futures. Yet, as a teacher role model or mentor the students need to feel a connection with their teachers, because as a role model, individuals are selected by that student due to their admiration for some role that person plays in their life. The participants stressed the need to have more teachers that are willing to go beyond teaching the content and to develop relationships with their students, because this even helps the students feel more connected to the content and want to learn. Recruitment and retention efforts have to really consider the needs of the African American males both as students and as current teachers to begin to compete with

other professions. Low salaries was mentioned by all the participants, yet they stressed how their commitment to the students was able to help them overlook the salary and persist in the field.

As explained, African American male teachers benefit all students, not just one particular population. However, the participants made it very clear that they need to “be there for the Black boys.” As they talked through the many issues of urban neighborhoods and the lack of a father or male role models/mentors they explained how they wanted to help fill this gap for their students and other African American boys in their schools. Adair (1984) explains the many roles that African American teachers often fill, such as the father figure role suggested by the participants, and how they see it as their duty to uplift this population. The participants reflected on their own upbringings and this allowed for them to place themselves in the shoes of their students and to realize the needs of these students on another level. Irvine (1988) suggests “the presence of black teachers in schools helps counter negative stereotypes that white children have about black people—stereotypes perpetuated by ignorance, prejudice, isolation, and distortion in the media” (p. 506). The participants’ explanation of African American boys seeing rappers, sports players, and drug dealers making a lot of money conflicts with the reality of what is often attainable, as well as the outcomes of choosing illegal professions.

All African American male teachers will not be able to reach each of the African American male students, but the participants show how their particular interactions made a difference in their students’ lives and other African American males have the opportunity to do the same. It is necessary to note that while the participants focused on the contributions that they wanted to make for African American students, particularly boys, they saw themselves creating change in other students, too. The teachers’ discussion of staying after school to talk to these students about issues unrelated to school, giving out their personal numbers to stay in contact

with students who are no longer their students, attending sporting events to show their support of the students, and just being there when the students need them continues to express their concern and drive to ensure the African American male students did have access to someone that looks like them and can relate to their issues in some way. Irvine (1988) explains that “children who feel not liked by their teachers frequently do not like themselves or school. They feel alienated and discouraged, and they eventually fail. This effect is exaggerated for low-income and minority students” (p. 507). The participants, too, realize the affect that they have on the experiences of these children and how this will impact students’ decision to be successful in school and whether or not they will choose to enter the teaching field.

Villegas and Irvine (2010) explain that teachers of color have the potential to increase the “educational experiences and academic outcomes of students of color,” (p. 188) which they explain helps the racial and ethnic achievement gap and ultimately this will provide more educated students of color that are prepared to enter and succeed in college. Hess and Leal (1997) explain that large urban school districts with a high numbers of teachers of color had significantly higher amounts of students going to college. Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, and Shaun (1990) note that African American students had lower rates of absence when they are taught by African American teachers. They may or may not decide to go into teaching, yet as research states it is necessary to ensure that this population is able to gain entry to college in order to consider teaching as a possible career.

Some of the participants explained a disconnect that existed between themselves and their teachers. The teachers were not able to relate or did not take time to truly understand the students. Reggie and Derrick admitted to consistently getting in trouble with teachers and principals, and they credited it to the lack of connection that the research explains. Teaching was

not their first choice of career, and they did not see themselves in this career until they began to see that they could have success in the field. Lent et al. (1994) explain components of SCCT as they state “activity involvement or practice, in turn, produces particular performance attainments (e.g. successes and failures), resulting in the revision of self-efficacy and outcome expectancy estimates” (p. 89). Students at an early age can begin to involve themselves in teacher shadowing, programs about the teacher profession, and such to gain a sense of whether this is something that they see themselves doing. Villegas and Irvine (2010) share, “If students failed to see adults of color in professional roles in schools and instead saw them over-represented in non-professional positions, they implicitly learned that white people are better suited than people of color to hold positions of authority in society (p. 177).

Reggie and Derrick wanted to challenge this authority and show these students that they, too, can be successful in this field. They help the students navigate what it means to be a teacher. Micah, on the other hand, changed his negative behavior once his African American male band teacher decided to make a personal connection with him. He understood that his teacher viewed him as more than just another student and this made a great difference. His teacher was supportive of him and ultimately led him into the teaching field. Teacher participants in Johnson’s (2008) study considered themselves exemplars of possibility for students of color and the same can be argued with the teachers in this study. All of the participants enjoyed teaching and even though a couple of the teachers expressed that they would eventually exit the profession, their dedication and persistence in the teaching field helped shed light on how to begin to better recruit and retain African American male teachers.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented an analysis of the research data. It included common themes that were presented within the responses and how Social Cognitive Career Theory helped in understanding the lived experiences of African American male teachers as it relates to their education and teaching career. Chapter seven includes a summary, recommendations, and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION**

As discussed, the main questions of this research study were what are the lived experiences of African American male teachers, as it relates to their education and teaching career; and what do African Americans male teachers perceive as motivation for entering and remaining in the teaching field? The study used Social Cognitive Career Theory to address the research questions in an effort to understand the lived experiences of African American male teachers. More specifically, it explored the teachers' K-12 and college education experiences, why these teachers decided to enter the teaching field, and what motivated them to continue on with this career. This chapter began by summarizing the study. It then discusses implications for policies. Next, it suggests areas for future research and recommendations based on the findings. Lastly, it provides an overall conclusion.

### **Implications for Policies and Practices**

Findings from this study have implications for policies and practices in K-16 and college settings and alternative teacher licensure programs. These include: (1) affordable access to colleges that have teacher preparation programs, (2) increased district and national level policy aimed at teacher diversity, (3) policy and practice changes in recruitment and retention efforts, (4) policy changes in required professional development, and (5) policy changes in programming of education preparation programs. Taking these into consideration will help to further diversity in the teacher workforce and begin to address the shortage of African American male teachers entering and remaining in the K-12 teaching field.

### **Areas for Future Research**

There are many areas for future research, yet I will focus on two particular areas. First, education stakeholders should conduct research with a wide range of racially diverse students,

student teachers, and teachers across states to better understand their experiences in education and in teaching or preparing to become a teacher. This includes the schools, districts, and universities all working together. This should be followed by using their voices to make changes in policy and in practices when considering recruitment and retention efforts. Second, educational institutions should consider research regarding ways to expose younger students in K-12 to the teaching profession prior to the start of college. This exposure needs to provide diverse groups of students the opportunity to understand why their presence in education is needed and how they particularly can be an asset and appreciated in the field. The gaps in this study provide the opportunity for further research as we continue to work towards diversifying the teaching workforce and ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students.

### **Recommendations**

As discussed, there are some recommendations, based on the findings from this study, regarding recruiting and retaining of African American male teachers. Below are some of the recommendations that the teachers presented, followed by overall recommendations.

If there was a regional or a black teachers in the Midwest event, we could meet twice a year or in the summer. You then see, ok there are other black males in this field. This obviously can't work for all schools, but if you have a 20-year-old vet, and maybe he takes me or a few new teachers under his wings, we can bounce ideas off of each other...I don't have to feel like one of the only black teachers. Being a part of something bigger and seeing that I can see myself doing this for an extended time. –James

I think they should do programs in the high schools where students have the option to do a teacher program and take some classes and experience peer visits, hang out with the kids or Big Brother type programs, hang out with younger generations, and as they go to college maybe tuition from the state or district can help them. A lot of them don't even have the opportunity to go to college to become a teacher. I know if somebody would've reached out to me and said hey if you join this program and go to college and become a teacher I will help you get a job, I would have considered it. -Reggie

If they make some changes regarding culture, so teach principals about this and have an overarching system in place where schools aren't penalized. I know the number of suspensions are recorded and principals are evaluated as part of this. If there was a more

holistic approach to the system instead of punitive approach that would make things much better. I have expressed about teacher workload. Our workday is much longer than someone else's would be. People don't realize just how long a teacher's day is. Get there early set up classroom leave late and still go home with papers to grade and lessons to tweak. Maybe have less meetings, an extra prep period, and more money. I have only seen like one billboard with an African American male that says be a teacher or a commercial. -Andre

It needs to be the few of us that are teachers, black males, we need to have a group to put together, maybe it needs to be like a career day and you get the black male teachers that you can find and umm this is all coming in my head...maybe we say it's a career day and guys come up dressed up and have kids guess what they do and they say x y z and he says I am a teacher and let the kids know how valuable they would be if they become a teacher. -Micah

Well this is one sided, but first of all we have to pay our teachers better. Also, if there were more initiatives in colleges to curate young black males to go into the education world, such as for me when I was in college I worked at the Boys and Girls Club a lot and volunteered with the youth. If it wasn't for somebody that knew to put me in a situation to try it out I would have never done it. You don't have to be an education major to go into education, just give African American males a taste of what it could look like to help build your community and see people who get fulfillment out of that. I can inspire somebody, they may say wow, but if they don't see it as a direct path then maybe they won't do it. -Arthur

You have to find your own purpose of why you do what you do. They can make programs but you have to have that purpose. Ask questions like what are your expectations. I would say a lot of men that I speak to say they want to mentor young African American males you know and some African American females, but for the most part that mentor type role. -Jaylon

I think the pay would make it competitive to other careers... Even though the students aren't there in the summer we could still work, something like that. A lot of things are attractive. We can find a way to get smaller classrooms and then like find some type of a balance in the workload, where I am not working twenty hours a day, where the only time I am not working is when I am sleeping. Umm and then I don't know everyone has a different philosophy, but I am sure finding a good fit to match philosophies. -Derrick

Recommendation 1: Districts should start the recruitment process as early as middle school.

They should create and implement plans to explore the experiences of African American male students in their schools, create policies and practices to address the issues that they are experiencing, and create programs that introduce these students to the profession of teaching, based on their school context. Districts should provide mentorship and internships through partnerships of already established organizations that encourage and assist African American

males to pursue teaching. As this is addressed, naturally school districts and universities will need to set plans in place to ensure the students are indeed graduating high school and attending college.

Recommendation 2: Districts should connect with universities and resources at universities to have African American male students begin exploring the major and the requirements prior to entering the university. These connections can create a pipeline to ensure students have the tools for financial assistance, university acceptance, and work towards successful completion.

Scholarships and teaching opportunities prior to entering college and throughout the college experience are key. While engaging in teaching opportunities, students need access to information that contextualizes the necessity of African American males, specifically, and helps them understand why they are needed as teachers in their communities and how they will be valued as a competent educator.

Recommendation 3: At the local, state and national level, organizations, meetings, and conferences should be created that allow African American male in-service, pre-service, and interested teachers to network, support, uplift, and develop plans of action. These plans of action can discuss what the teachers see as a necessity to move forward in continuing to increase the population of African American males and research that supports this. The needs are different depending on the context of the schools, yet by hosting local, state, and national meetings and conferences they together can decide the most pressing issues. These issues may change as society happenings change, but it is imperative to have their voice included as education and teacher policy and practices are made.

Recommendation 4: Schools need to ensure that incoming teachers have a mentor their first three years. This mentor should have specific training relative to the school context and to working

with teachers of color. All of the teachers in the study had someone in the education field that inspired them and mentored them at various stages of their K-12, college, and teaching experiences, yet many of them expressed the lack of mentorship within the schools they taught. The teachers that are chosen to mentor this population have to have a cultural understanding of the needs of these teachers and how necessary the mentor is in retaining these teachers.

Recommendation 5: Everyone has to play a part in uplifting the discourse around the teaching profession. Too often, teachers are blamed and spoken of negatively. Those that are educators have to ensure that they, too, share their experiences with diverse groups of students and invite them to consider teaching as a potential career. Teachers, specifically, have to make sure they are providing positive interactions with their African American male students, so that students want to come back and teach. These students need to see someone that looks like them, reflects their experiences, background, and is able to understand the context in which their circumstance frames their thoughts on education.

Recommendation 6: Funding is a great issue in many schools, particularly urban inner city school districts. Changes have to be made to consider ways to increase pay. Suggestions include: provide optional salary extension if teachers work for the full year, provide additional increases in the salary steps as teachers earn higher degrees, consider the cost of living and rethink whether or not the salary steps fairly take this into account, and restructure the loan forgiveness program, consider ways to distribute salaries more equally across states, still keeping into account the cost of living, etc..

Recommendation 7: Colleges and universities should form partnerships with existing African American male recruitment programs, such as Clemson University's Call Me Mister Program. Tuition assistance, loan forgiveness, academic support, cohort systems for social and cultural

support, and assistance with job placement are all offered through this program. Teachers in the study all discussed these factors as some of the needs for African American males to enter and successfully remain in the teaching field.

Recommendation 8: There needs to be greater efforts to collaborate with alternative teacher preparation programs and districts need to maximize their recruitment strategies by including a focus on their teacher assistants, students in undeclared majors, community college students, and other individuals who are not following a traditional career path and want to change careers.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, African American male teachers are a necessity in the teaching field. Their presence is needed as we continue to provide diverse learning experiences for all students and show young African American males that they, too, can become a teacher if they choose. This study contributes to the understanding of African American male teachers and their educational and teaching experiences. It also helps all to understand what motivated them to choose to enter the teaching profession and continue in the career or leave. Teachers, administrators, policy makers, researchers, community members, parents, and students, amongst a host of others can benefit from this research. Ultimately, it will help to address the shortage of this population in the teaching field. This study found that it is necessary to introduce racially diverse populations to teaching at early ages; develop a comprehensive recruitment plan that increases the representation of racially diverse populations in educator preparation programs, retain the populations that are least represented in the teaching field, and create lasting policy to support these diversity efforts. This calls for strategic implementation of strategies that will introduce new recruitment and retention efforts to ensure change.

Reflection on past policy and initiatives is necessary as stakeholders consider how to decrease the teacher diversity, particularly African American male shortage. Educational

institutions need to consider the financial needs of minority students and how this can impact their decision to become a teacher. Key stakeholders should discuss and develop plans to help mitigate strain on students who cannot afford college and provide more incentives and financial assistance for minority students that agree to go into teaching, beyond the current incentives. Districts should consider providing current minority teachers opportunities to be teacher leaders in their school and district. Furthermore, efforts still need to continue to ensure all are putting forth efforts to provide equitable and diverse experiences for all students in the classroom.

This study included seven African American male teachers that teach in Eythlyen's traditional public schools and charter schools. They all teach at various grade levels and within multiple subjects. The participants' findings focused on themes that include: (1) The barriers of African American male teachers; (2) African American male teachers and their persistence in the teaching field; (3) The role of mentorship and African American male presence; and (4) Strategic recruitment and retention necessary to attract and keep African American male teachers. Within these themes topics such as having to prove themselves, subjective evaluation systems, cultural differences, stereotypes, being there for Black boys, and K-12 education experiences, were revealed. These research findings benefit stakeholders at the national, state, and local levels and contribute to the discussion regarding the shortage of African American male teachers in the U.S. public schools. Finally, research, and policy and practice changes still need to occur as we promote the necessity to address the African American male teacher shortage.

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