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A Critical Narrative Inquiry Into the Lived Experiences of African American Male K-12 Novice Educators in an Urban School District in Central Alabama

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A CRITICAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE K-12 NOVICE EDUCATORS IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT IN CENTRAL ALABAMA

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to share how African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigated their own educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in central Alabama. An urban school district was identified from findings from the Census Bureau and had a school that sat inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population of 250,000 or more. Because of its size, urban school districts were diversified with a large enrollment and an increased number of minority students. By using a qualitative, critical narrative inquiry approach, participants were able to recount their personal experiences in the field of education and describe their realities through the phases of being recruited, retained, and supported as a highly qualified teacher whose goals are to enhance student learning. Through this study, participants gave voice to their lived experiences and tried to empower administrators and policy makers to create change within policies and practices to provide avenues for more African American/Black males to come into the role of a K-12 teacher.

The researcher identified seven African American/ Black male novice teachers from an urban school district in Central Alabama. The teachers' subject matters were history, science, English Language Arts, band, and special education. Data analysis revealed five emergent themes: (a) personal educational K-12 journey, (b) positive African American/Black male support systems, (c) desire to support students, (d)

triumphs and challenges attaining licensure/certification and service as a novice educator, and (e) anticipated professional aspirations. Participants described their educational journeys from K-12, higher education, to their first year(s) as novice teachers. Additionally, study participants were humbled by their experiences and were empowered to serve as change agents, transforming student learning and the quality of teachers' support.

The findings of this study may lead to future studies on how African American male novice K-12 teachers are recruited, retained, and supported in urban school districts. Finally, this research study may empower government leaders at the federal and state levels to remove barriers that have contributed to the 2% of African American males employed nationally in the United States as teachers.

Keywords: African American male, novice, teacher, urban, lived experiences

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Viola Aneice King-Blackmon, who died the day after bringing me into the world. I dedicate this to all of my family members who never gave up on me but instead encouraged me to finish the program. I am truly thankful to all of my wonderful cousins, aunties, and uncles who adopted me as a member of their immediate families.

I dedicate this dissertation to the two men who mentored and challenged my perspective about life, the late Orlando Robinson and my cousin-in-law Gregory Salters. Those two men challenged me to be the researcher that I am today. Their belief that I was equipped to be successful in the doctoral program empowered me to be resilient when times were rough.

I am very appreciative of all of my colleagues who remained in my corner and never gave up on me. From the sidelines, they were there cheering me on to completion. But most importantly, this dissertation is dedicated to everyone who was given up on, told they would not be successful, and forgotten. I encourage you to never give up and keep the faith!

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I also had awesome committee members, Dr. John Dantzler, Dr. Rozanne Mitchell, Dr. Gary Peters, and Dr. Jingping Sun. Their level of professionalism and ethics of care is second to none. I thank you all for challenging me to raise my standard of excellence to another level. To all of my professors (especially Dr. Keith Gurley), you guys not only prepared me to be an educational leader but also a more thoughtful thinker. Thank you!

I want to thank the seven men who participated in this dissertation study. I know it was challenging at times trying to find the right time to meet, especially during the Covid-19 epidemic. Despite the fact that we communicated via Zoom, each participant was willing, courteous, and excited about the impact this study could have on current and future educational practices. I am forever thankful for your sacrifices!

Last but not least, I had the time of my life working with each of my doctoral cohort colleagues. Their positive energy, intelligence, and collegial spirit inspired me to evaluate my own work ethics. Thank you for providing a sense of family during all of our classes and discussions. You are the best!

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PRESENTING THE SCENE

Mother to Son
Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

Langston Hughes (1922)

Introduction: Setting the Stage

In the poem "Mother to Son," Hughes describes the determination of a mother who had to overcome some of life's hardships and used her story to inspire her son to overcome the challenges he also would face in life. Symbolically, throughout the poem, the mother was encouraging her son to overcome the social, political, and economical barriers that opposed him. Hughes's poem draws attention to the daily struggle African

Americans endured over the years. In 1922, when the poem was written, African Americans were 60 years removed from the Civil War, which was fought to end slavery (Yazawa, 2008). From the 1920s to the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s, African Americans were battling to win judicial victories with the help of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and running from hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) (Daniel, 1987).

For African Americans, the journey for equal rights, as first-class citizens, has been an uphill climb since the implementation of the Civil War Amendments (e.g. voting rights, a quality education, land ownership) in the mid-nineteenth century (Flynn, 2015). In an effort to overcome the institution of slavery, Civil Rights legislation was passed to end social injustice and create more legal and economic opportunities for African Americans (Flynn, 2015). Of all racial groups, African American men arguably had the most challenging hurdles to overcome, including education (Spring, 2016). For example, African American men were denied quality employment, were regularly harassed by local police, constantly lived in fear of being lynched, and were denied the opportunity of a first-class education (Spring, 2016). Therefore, this study seeks to share the narratives of African American male novice teachers to give voice to their educational experiences. Moreover, it will provide a much-needed counternarrative to the experiences of the dominant culture. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state:

> For us, narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a keyway of writing and thinking about it. (p. 18)

Narrative inquiry gives participants the opportunity to "begin with experience as expressed in lived and told stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 40). Because I used Critical Race Theory (CRT), this study applies the Critical Narrative Inquiry (CNI) approach. In using CNI, I was able to deconstruct participants' stories and explore assumptions about the ways their stories were constructed and positioned (Hickson, 2016). I merged CRT and my participants' narratives to examine their idea of society and culture as they related to categorizations of race, law, and power (Hickson, 2016; Ladson-Billings &Tate, 1995).

The Problem to be Addressed

Few studies have documented the lived experiences of K-12 African American male teachers (Bristol, 2017; Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brockenbrough, 2014; Escoffery-Runnels, Hayes, & Juarez, 2014); therefore, more research is needed to explore this phenomenon (Browder, & Bryan, 2013; Bryan & Milton-Williams, 2016). African American male teachers are disproportionately underrepresented in K-12 public schools in the United States (Erwin & Graham, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics in 2010, African American male teachers composed approximately 7.5% of all male teachers nationwide and made up approximately 2% of all teachers (Erwin & Graham, 2011). Recruitment and retention of African American male teachers has recently garnered a surge of attention in both the academic and popular press (Anderson, Kharem, & Pabon, 2011). While the popular press frequently oversimplifies the need for African American male teachers to assuage the educational crises by serving as role models for African American students, many school districts continue to lag

behind progressive efforts to recruit qualified African American male teachers to address the academic learning needs of students (Anderson et al., 2011). Anderson et al. (2011) note that school districts should recruit African American male teachers not only for role-modeling purposes, but also for implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum with the purpose of connecting with students of color.

The shortage of African American male teachers is a significant issue that many school districts in the United States are trying to address (Madkins, 2011). According to Bryan and Browder (2013), "studies are rare regarding the experiences of male teachers, particularly Black male teachers" (p. 143). The voices of African American males and their impact have been under-studied and overlooked in theory and research (Bryan & Browder, 2013). Since the 1980s, school districts have heavily prioritized recruiting persons of color into the teaching profession (Brown & Butty, 1999). According to Brown & Butty (1999), "white teachers in the inner city comprise 73% of the teacher workforce compared to 98% in rural areas, 91% in small towns, and 81% in suburban school districts" (p. 281). The attrition rate among new teachers is alarmingly high with new teachers leaving the profession within five years (Brown & Butty, 1999). Bryan and Ford (2014) note:

> Nationally, 75% of teachers are White females, 10% are White males, 6% are Black females, and a paltry 1% of teachers are Black males. It is possible for students from all racial backgrounds to spend 13 years in school and never have a Black male teacher! (p. 156)

Moreover, Madkins (2011) observes that "Black students comprise about 16% of our public school students, but Black teachers only represent roughly 8% of the teaching

workforce" (p. 417). The disparity of same-race teacher-to-student, in academic settings, prevents students, especially students of color, from partaking in the cultural experiences and linguistic backgrounds of African American male teachers (Madkins, 2011; Meidl, 2018). *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) was a landmark Supreme Court decision which ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional (Madkins, 2011). Before the Supreme Court's ruling, African American students were predominantly taught by African American teachers (Madkins, 2011). After the decision, a disproportionate number of African American teachers were removed from the teaching profession (Madkins, 2011). According to Meidl (2018), in 1940, teaching was the leading profession for African American men. Decades later, the number of African American teacher-to-student same-race declined (Madkins, 2011). When students of color do not see an image of themselves in positions of leadership, it contributes to their disinterest in joining that profession (Meidl, 2018).

The media constantly communicates the need for African American male teachers by identifying them as role models (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Instead of viewing African American males mostly as role models, research studies should also aim to redefine them as content and pedagogical experts (Anderson et al., 2011). The potential impact and leadership of African American male teachers can positively affect White students and students of color alike. According to Siwatu et al. (2017), "Students of color are often taught by teachers who do not understand the cultural context of classroom behavior and the role of culture in the teaching and learning process" (p. 863). Most African American men do not reject the teaching profession because of the failure of the education system to prepare them for college, their inability to perform well on state testing requirements

for licensure, or poor attempts of school districts to recruit them (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Retrospectively, many reject the profession because of the poor treatment they encountered as students (Erwin & Graham, 2011).

Not only has recruiting African American men in the field become a challenge, but so has retention (Gholam, 2018). Bryan and Williams (2017) state:

> What is often missing from the literature on Black male teacher recruitment and retention is the need to recruit and retain Black male teachers who are culturally relevant and responsive to the academic and social needs of this population in classrooms. (p. 210)

Many teachers transitioning from higher education to the classroom leave the teaching profession due to the lack of mentoring and additional supports from peers and school leaders (Gholam, 2018). Many African American males lament "experiencing low expectations, racial microagressions, and stereotyping had an impact on their desire to enter the teaching profession" (Goings & Bianco, 2016, p. 636).

Purpose of the Study

Because many school districts have used questionable practices to recruit and retain African American male teachers, along with educational challenges affecting their experiences (Erwin & Graham, 2011), **t**he purpose of this study is to share how African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigated their own educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in central Alabama. By using a qualitative, critical narrative inquiry approach, participants were able to recount their personal experiences in the field of education and describe their realities through the

phases of being recruited, retained, and supported as a highly qualified teacher whose goals are to enhance student learning. This study was guided by the following research question: How do African American/Black males become K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in central Alabama? Through their personal narratives, participants articulated their views regarding power, race, and gender roles in the field of education, provided a counternarrative to the stereotypes placed on African American men by the dominant culture (Brown & Butty, 2019), and offered observers an opportunity to develop an appreciation and understanding of the social and cultural experiences of African American male novice teachers. Through this study, participants gave voice to their lived experiences and tried to empower administrators and policy makers to create change within policies and practices to provide avenues for more African American/Black males to come into the role of a K-12 teacher. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe some of the researcher's responsibility of narrative inquiry in the following ways:

> An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)

Through stories being told by both the researcher and participants, observers may develop a greater understanding of the experiences of African American male novice teachers in the field of education.

Significance of the Study

The pipeline from K-12 education to college has seen a drastic decline in the number of African American males choosing education as a career choice (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Many African Americans males are selecting other disciplines of study (Erwin & Graham, 2011). This has produced a shortage of African American male teachers (Madkins, 2011). Many African American men refuse to enter the teacher profession due to their academic struggles as K-12 students, failed relationships with school leaders, and the perception of the teaching profession as fiscally challenging (Brown & Butty, 2019). With experts predicting an increase of minority students in urban schools by 2040, researchers believe that hiring more teachers, especially African American men, will help to ameliorate the lack of academic leadership in front of many classrooms (Warren, 2013).

This study is significant in that it has allowed African American male teachers the opportunity to create a counternarrative of their personal experience as an educator. The teachers' voices gave testimony to their own educational journeys, choosing education as a career; their ability to face and deal with the everyday challenges as an instructional leader; and the level of support that was provided to them. In an attempt to help school leaders create a more inclusive work environment, this study aimed to build upon the limited amount of scholarly research available regarding the lived experiences of African American male novice teachers.

Philosophical Paradigm/Interpretive Framework

The philosophical assumptions that complimented this study was ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological. Ontology can be defined as "when researchers conduct qualitative research, they are embracing the idea of multiple realities" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20). As a researcher, I used the ontological assumption with an understanding that reality is seen through many views or interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The epistemological assumption states that "researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 21). Through the lens of epistemology, I gathered knowledge about the phenomenon and relied on rich, thick quotes from participants to understand the experiences of African American male novice educators. The axiological assumption states that "researchers acknowledge that research is value-laden and that biases are present in relation to the role in the study context" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20). Using the axiological assumption, I used value-laden judgements as I interacted with participants and identified my position in the research by sharing my own biases. Methodologically, this qualitative study took a critical narrative inquiry (CNI) approach. Data was collected and later analyzed to get detailed understandings of the participants' experiences.

The interpretive framework that complements CNI was pragmatism. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "Individuals holding an interpretive framework based on pragmatism focus on the outcomes of the research, the actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry" (p. 26). As a pragmatist, "truth is what works at the time; it is not based in dualism between reality independent of the mind or within the mind.

Pragmatist researchers look to the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of research based on its intended consequences” (p. 27). The experiences of African American male teachers are real, and in order to fully appreciate and understand their journey, I paid attention to their lived experiences. Participants were asked to provide detailed descriptions as they shared their stories with hopes of closing the gap in the research literature through personal, first-hand narratives.

Theoretical Framework

To analyze the research question, the two theories that will be used are Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). CRT critiques marginalized people’s historical perspectives of race and racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Through the lens of CRT, the researcher was able to analyze the challenges found in the counternarratives of African American male novice teachers (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). SCT focused on efficacy and confidence (Bandura, 1993). SCT aided the researcher in understanding why it was vital for African American male novice teachers to receive the appropriate supports to be retained and supported as an instructional leader. CRT explained how race and the imbalances of power negatively impacted African American men’s aspiration to enter the teaching profession. SCT identified the hurdles African American men had to overcome in order to become educators and retained and supported as teachers.

Research Question

As stated earlier, because many school districts have used questionable practices to recruit and retain African American male teachers, along with educational challenges affecting their experiences (Erwin & Graham, 2011), **t**he purpose of this study is to share the narratives of how African American/Black males became educators in an urban K-12 school system located in central Alabama. Therefore, the following research question and sub-questions guided this study: How do African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigate their own educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in central Alabama?

- SQ1. How do African American/Black novice teachers describe their personal educational journeys (K-12 and Higher Education)?
- SQ2. What specific challenges and triumphs did African American/Black novice teachers experience in becoming K-12 educators?
- SQ3. What are African American/Black novice teachers' current experiences working in an urban Alabama K-12 school district?

Overview of Methodology

For this study, a critical narrative inquiry approach was used to explore the lived and told experiences of African American male novice teachers. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "Narrative inquirers tend to begin with experience as expressed in lived and told stories" (p. 40). What makes this narrative inquiry critical is that African American male novice teachers are allowed the opportunity to narrate their educational journey from K-12, higher education, and then as classroom teacher, while the researcher

gave care to the historical, cultural, and social contexts that have also influenced their experiences (Hickson, 2016). With this broader lens, critical narrative inquiry "provides a framework for deconstructing the stories and exploring assumptions about knowledge, power, and reflexivity" (Hickson, 2016, p. 380) within their narratives.

The research setting included one urban school district in central Alabama. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "An important step in the process is to find people or places to study and to gain access to and establish rapport with participants so that they will provide good data" (p. 148). The authors further note:

> In a narrative study, the researcher reflects more on whom to sample-the individual may be convenient to study because she or he is available; a politically important individual who attracts attention or is marginalized; or a typical, ordinary person. All of the individuals need to have stories to tell about their lived experiences. (p. 157)

Research participants were purposively selected based on their experiences and qualifications. For the purpose of this study, I selected African American male novice teachers as participants. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "narrative research uses the three-dimensional space elements for analyzing data, which include "interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situation (physical places or the storyteller's places)" (p. 72).

Findings from collected data were validated using the researcher's lens, participants' lenses, and the reader's lens. I upheld the highest standards of ethical research, guided by standards outlined by the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Institutional Review Board (IRB). Careful attention was given to anticipate and

take proactive measures to avoid violating the ethics of my research. As stated by Creswell and Poth (2018), “Typically these ethical issues relate to three principles guiding ethical research: respect for persons (i.e., privacy and consent), concern for welfare (i.e., minimize harm and augment reciprocity), and justice (i.e., equitable treatment and enhance inclusivity)” (p. 151).

Assumptions

As I explored this phenomenon, I had several assumptions about the lived experiences of African American/Black male novice K-12 teachers in an urban school district in central Alabama. Bryant (2004) states, “In short, all of our research projects spring from assumptions. These are not the theories that we may be exploring. Rather, they are the beliefs we bring to the study that we will accept as valid” (p. 56). The following assumptions were made for the study: (a) individuals who participated in this study did so willingly as volunteers; (b) participants expressed pride in their status and enjoyed being employed as a K-12 educator; (c) participants followed Alabama’s ethical policies consistently; (d) participants recognized that schools, like other organizations, were subject to the policies and practices that might favor some more than others; and (e) the participants were truthful as they described their experiences.

Limitations

According to Bryant (2004), “Limitations are those restrictions created by your methodology” (p. 58). This study was subject to the following limitations: (a) according to Creswell and Poth (2018), narrative studies utilizes a small sample as participants. For

this study, there were only seven African American/Black male participants; (b) the research study did not account for the experiences of other African American/Black male educators in similar urban districts; and (c) data was collected via participant interviews, which limited study findings beyond those individuals who participated in the study. Face-to-face interviews were disallowed due to the global Coronavirus epidemic. Also known as Covid-19, this virus was so devastating that in order to prevent the loss of life, local, state, and national leaders restricted individuals' mobility to work, go to school, and participate in other facets of life.

Delimitations

Bryant (2004) also defines delimitation as "the factors that prevent you from claiming your findings are true for all people in all times and places" (p. 57). This study was subject to the following delimitations: (a) African American/Black male K-12 novices teachers, (b) African American/Black male novices who have been in education for five years or less, and (c) participants were selected from an urban school district in central Alabama.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms will be used throughout the study:

- African American: a descendant of enslaved Africans whose ancestors took part in the African diaspora, and were forced into slavery by British, Spanish, and Portuguese imperialists in the Americas (Spring, 2016). According to Tuch and Martin (2005), the terminology has changed many times over the years from

"colored" to "Negro" and now to "Black." Civil rights leaders in the 1980s, championed the term "African American" turning from race to ethnicity or culture to define the group (Tuch & Martin, 2005).

- Black: the identification of anyone who is visibly melanated due to the complexion of his/her skin, including those with Black, Asian, Arab, Pacific Islander, or Latin American ancestry (Mentzer, 2002) and adoption of customs, mannerisms, or traditions associated with being Black. In recent years, immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean have rejected the label "African American" stating that it is too restrictive, and preferred the identification of the term "Black" because it is more inclusive of their collective experience (Simms, 2018).
- Critical Narrative Inquiry: a methodological approach which "provides a framework for deconstructing the stories and exploring assumptions about knowledge, power, and reflexivity" (Hickson, 2015, p. 380).
- Critical Race Theory: the belief that "race continues to be significant in the United States, U.S. society is based on property rights rather than human rights, and the intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool for understanding inequity" (Ladson- Billings &Tate, 1995, p.1).
- K-12: the required grades for public school students to attend, also known as the primary and secondary grade levels that are a prerequisite for students in the United States before advancing to college (Link, 2018).
- Mulatto: a person of mixed Black and White ancestry and who can navigate between the two (Ha, 2009).

- Narrative Inquiry: “a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20).
- Novice: For this study, a beginning educator usually with less than five years of experience (Sezer, 2017).
- Teacher Recruitment: the action school districts take to increase the number of teachers in the field of education (Graham & Erwin, 2011).
- Teacher Retention: the action school districts take to keep or maintain the number of teachers in the field of education (Bryan & Ford, 2014).
- Teacher Self-Efficacy: according to Infurna, Riter, and Schultz (2018), teacher’s self-efficacy is “teacher’s belief in his or her own capability to organize and execute courses of action” (p. 1).
- Teacher Support: the action school districts take to provide guidance and assistance to strengthen teachers content and pedagogical capacity (Goings et al., 2015).
- Urban School Districts: according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2006) an urban school district is identified from findings from the Census Bureau and has a school that sits inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population of 250,000 or more. Because of its size, urban school districts are diversified with a large enrollment and an increased number of minority students (Yavuz & Gulmez, 2018).

Organization of the Dissertation

In this study, the narratives of African American male K-12 novice educators in urban school districts was explored. This chapter introduced the background to the study, problem statement, theoretical framework, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature that supported this inquiry, including research into the experiences of African American male novices and the challenges they faced in K-12 urban school districts. In the following chapters, the research design, findings, implications and recommendations for future research are presented.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

Langston Hughes's (1922) poem "Mother to Son" was notably remembered for its famous line "Life for me ain't been no crystal stair." In the poem, the mother does her best to encourage her son to remain hopeful and resilient when life becomes challenging. Hughes's (1922) poem gives credence to the poor living conditions and unfair treatment African Americans encountered on behalf of White Americans despite written federal and state laws in the United States. When the authors of the United States Declaration of Independence and Constitution wrote the nation's law-abiding document, its primary purpose was to protect the civil liberties of its citizens. According to Spring (2016), the two documents primarily protected the rights of White landowning males. For nearly two centuries, the great American "melting pot" was not so welcoming for minorities. Multiculturalism, which is the presence of several cultural or ethnic groups within a society, was an excellent idea that was not accepted by many of the local, state, and federal lawmakers (Spring, 2016).

For African Americans, the journey for equal rights, as first-class citizens, has been an uphill climb since the implementation of Civil War Amendments in the mid-nineteenth century. History recorded how the Thirteenth Amendment (1865) abolished slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) gave African Americans the opportunity to be first-class citizens, and the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) gave African American men the right to vote (Spring, 2016). In an effort to overcome the institution of slavery, Civil

Rights legislation of the 1950s and 60s was passed to end social injustice and create more legal and economic opportunities for African Americans (Flynn, 2015). Of all ethnic groups, Black men had the most challenging hurdle to overcome (Spring, 2016). One of those hurdles was and remains in the field of education.

There is a documented shortage of African American male teachers in the U.S. public school job market (Pabon, 2014). Oakley et al. (2009) state:

> In the South, mandated desegregation created conditions that resulted in decreases in black teachers. But in the non-south the opposite occurred, although the impact of mandated desegregation weakened after 1990. Nonetheless, today, black teachers are under-represented in all regions- and, as the racial and ethnic diversity of the school-age student body continues to increase, the shortage of black and other minority educators has grown into a major public-education policy issue. (p. 1591)

Although the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas* ended school segregation, the decision negatively impacted the employment of African American educators, especially men (Pabon, 2014). After the *Brown* ruling, the mistreatment of Black teachers negatively impacted Black students and their community (Milner & Howard, 2004). African American educators, who were considered the champions and pillars of their community, began to witness school closings, job losses, and rejections from employment at White schools (Anderson, 1988; Spring, 2016). Its effect has continued to the twenty-first century (Milner &Howard, 2004). Currently, less than 2% of African American males are employed as K-12 educators (Pabon, 2014). With attrition rates among new teachers being alarmingly high, it has become a priority

over the past decades for school leaders to recruit men of color in the nation's urban school districts (Brown & Butty, 1999). Unfortunately, there is a gap in the literature to explain why so few African American males have chosen to enter the teaching profession (Madkins, 2011). According to Madkins (2011) "The literature suggests that since there is a demographic disparity, there is a need to increase the numbers of minority teachers in our public schools" (p. 423).

Theoretical Framework

As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to share the narratives of how African American/Black males become educators in an urban K-12 school system located in central Alabama. This is important because currently, there is a miniscule of research that gives voice to the experiences of African American/Black male novice teachers. The theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) were chosen as the lens to guide this study of the lived experiences of African American male novice K-12 teachers. For this study, the purpose of CRT is to provide a lens through which to explore the historical perspectives of race and racism in education in the southeastern region of the United States. According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), "Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States…. The 'voice' component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice" (p. 48, 58).

In many schools, novices lack the necessary capacity to lead learners and choose to leave the profession (Lotter et al., 2018). SCT focuses on teacher efficacy. Bandura

(1993) explains that one's self-efficacy influences how they feel, think, or successfully complete a task. School leaders can help improve school and student data by providing teachers with the necessary support they need so they can believe that they can effectively contribute to student's success. The two theories will help to illustrate why African American/Black male novices in K-12 urban schools have the smallest ethnic percentage demographically in the field of education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to share the narratives of how African American/Black males became educators in an urban K-12 school system located in central Alabama. From the research literature explored, experts in the field believe that school leaders should implement practices that advocate overcoming challenges recruiting African American male teachers, retaining African American male teachers, and conducting practices that support African American male teachers.

Historical Significance

In this section, a review of the historical significances and relevant literature is presented. The section begins recounting the history of African American men in K-12 and is followed by the history of African American men in higher education. This section examines the access and challenges African American men faced in both institutions.

History of African American Men in K-12

Since the seventeenth century, African Americans were determined to transition from their former status as slaves to citizens (Spring, 2016). Gaining access to a K-12 education would have its challenges for African Americans; however, acquiring an education, would strengthen their quest for freedom (Anderson, 1998).

Access to K-12

In order to better understand the current educational experiences of African American/Black male educators, we must first understand their historical educational journeys. In United States history, the first group of slaves was recorded being shipped to North America around 1619 (Spring, 2016). According to Span (2005), "For approximately the first 250 years of the African American experience (1619-1865) every American colony and later state prohibited or stridently restricted teaching free and enslaved African Americans the rudiments of literacy - the skills of reading and writing" (p. 27). British colonizers who brought slaves from Africa to the United States immediately began to identify the racial and cultural differences of the slaves (Boskin, 1966). In the early 1640s, the colonies of Massachusetts and Virginia instituted educational policies and programs to train White children in learning and labor, whereas the newly arrived slaves were not given such luxuries because they were considered uneducable (Boskin, 1966). According to Boskin (1966), "The Virginia legislature did not provide for the compulsory education of mulatto children until 1765, at which time they were grouped with the orphans, poor, and illegitimate children" (p. 133).

Denying African Americans access to education was a strategy that colonies used to prevent rebellious and revolutionary ideas transferring to the minds of other slaves (Tang, 1997). In 1740, South Carolina adopted a compulsory law forbidding African Americans to learn how to write (Erickson, 1997). Soon other Southern states followed with stringent laws forbidding Africans to read or write. Individuals like Frederick Douglas were taught in "secret schools" or private schools at the risk of being flogged or killed (Erickson, 1997). According to Cornelius (1983), slave owners view of educating slaves was simply to teach them bible literacy. In an attempt to teach slaves the Bible, many of them were denied the right to learn how to write because of the fear that one day, slaves would threaten the social order of society (Cornelius, 1983). Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States, also racialized African American biology and intelligence as mentally inferior to Whites and went on to convince many followers that schooling and education would be a waste of time (Spann, 2005).

According to Spring (2016), "By the outbreak of the Civil War in 1860, it is estimated that 5 percent of slaves could read, sometimes at the risk of life or limb. Individual slaves would sneak books and teach themselves while hiding from their masters" (p. 55). Several slaves learned to read and write from their White playmates before and after school (Cornelius, 1983). A few slaveowners in the South took risks by educating slaves because they believed in the intrinsic value of education, moral obligation, and according to Cornelius (1983), it served a pragmatic purpose. He notes,

> Washington Curry's father was a doctor, and Curry recalled that "there were so many folks that came to see the doctor and wanted to leave numbers and addresses that he had to have someone to 'tend to that and he taught my father to

> read and write so that he could do it." Adeline Willis' mistress taught her the letters on the newspapers and what they spelled so she could bring the papers the whites wanted. Simpson Campbell's "Marse Bill" taught some of his slaves reading and writing so he could use them "booking cotton in the field and such like. (p.179)

In northern colonies, African Americans were segregated by law and cultural practices which affected their educational opportunities (Spann, 2005). African Americans also became feared because their population began to out-number Whites (Spring, 2016). In 1704, New York's all-White Anglican sectarian church (The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) created a catechizing school for African Americans (Mabee, 1979). From 1830 until the Civil War (1861-1865), "statute or custom" purposefully placed African American children in "separate schools in nearly every northern community" or excluded them altogether" (Spann, 2005, p. 29). Although some colonies used exclusionary practices, the state of Massachusetts passed its state's Education Act in 1789, providing schooling for African Americans regardless of race (Spann, 2005). Pennsylvania and Ohio would join Massachusetts allowing African Americans to be educated but in segregated facilities. Racially segregated school were the norms from the late eighteenth century until the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional in 1954 (Spring, 2016). In the 1820s, African American parents complained to the Boston School Committee about its practices of hiring inferior teachers, their children learning in dilapidated buildings, and the lack of resources White children enjoyed (Spring, 2016). In 1849, when an African American parent complained about the segregated school his child was forced to attend, the Massachusetts Supreme

Judicial Court ruled that the child's school system provided equal schools for Black children (Spring, 2016). In 1855, the governor of Massachusetts signed into law "a requirement that no child (including African Americans) be denied admission to a public school on the basis of race or religious opinions" (Spring, 2016, p. 52).

According to Mabee (1979), in 1805, New York's Manumission Society was educating Blacks to teach Black children and "it was an advantage for black children to be taught by blacks; it will help to 'kindle a spirit of emulation' in the black children" (p. 93). By the 1830s, northern cities such as New York City, Brooklyn, Boston, and Philadelphia were appointing African American teachers to teach African American students (Mabee, 1979). Anderson (1988) recorded that northern missionaries went south to teach African American children the values and rules of being a citizen. Many missionaries were astonished to learn how focused many ex-slaves were as they observed how former slaves independently built and staffed their own schools with African American teachers (Anderson, 1988).

Challenges

Before the start of the Civil War, African Americans were preparing to create schools and educate their own illiterates (Anderson, 1988). After the Civil War, the Freedman's Bureau was established to educate former slaves and support their transition as citizens into society (Anderson, 1998). By the end of the nineteenth century, several southern states' school spending expenditures per capita were higher for Blacks than Whites, but this was reversed in the early years of the twentieth century by racist antics of southern politicians (Spring, 2016). Despite actions taken by several state governments in

the early 1900s to reduce the number of schools for African Americans students, the community rallied in support by paying taxes to build schools for their children, with the belief that a good education was necessary for their child's freedom and citizenship (Anderson, 1988).

Throughout history, there have been specific laws, court decisions, and government actions that were antagonistic to the idea of freedom for African Americans. According to the following legislations and rulings would affect African Americans status as citizens, as well as their educational opportunities:

Naturalization Act of 1790

The Naturalization Act of 1790 negatively impacted African Americans because it excluded enslaved Africans from becoming citizens. The law granted immigration to free White individuals of good character. African Americans would not be protected by the Constitution, written in 1787, nor the Declaration of Independence, written in 1776. The 1790 Act gave political institutions in the United States the authority to treat minorities, especially African Americans as property. This act would stand until the passage of the 1870 Naturalization Act, which gave citizenship rights "to aliens African of African nativity and to persons of African descent" (Spring, 2016, p. 45).

Dred Scott's Decision of 1857

Dred Scott was an African American male, from the state of Missouri who was denied by Chief Justice Roger Taney, of the United States Supreme Court, the privilege to be recognized as a free person (Graber, 1997). The significance of this Court ruling

was that slaves and their descendants, free or not, could not be United States citizens. Slaves also could not sue in federal court. The decision rejected the idea of equity of the law for African Americans and denied them the protections provided by the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence (Graber, 1997).

Fourteenth Amendment

According to Finkelman (2014), "the drafters of the Fourteenth Amendment tried to force the former slave states to enfranchise blacks on the same basis as whites by threatening to reduce their representation in Congress if blacks were not allowed to vote" (p.1021). Passed after the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed citizenship to native-born African Americans and equal protection under the Constitution to not be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of the law (Spring, 2016). The significance of this amendment is that it included all persons born or naturalized in the United States. The amendment, passed in 1868, took away the authority of the Naturalization Act of 1790 and granted African Americans the opportunity to have access to all civil and legal protections White Americans enjoyed.

Naturalization Act of 1870

The Naturalization Act of 1870 reversed the previous law, which was passed in 1790, by granting U.S. citizenship to native-African Americans and their descendants (Spring, 2016). The law would serve White and African Americans but exclude Native and Asian Americans (Spring, 2016). The 1870 act promoted integration in the social, political, and economic arenas for African Americans.

Fifteenth Amendment

Ratified in 1870, this law gave African American men the right to vote (Amar, 1996; Spring, 2016). The fifteenth amendment did not grant women (African American or White) the right to participate in the electoral process. Suffrage for women would not be granted until 1920 (Amar, 1996; Spring, 2016). African American men took advantage of suffrage (the right to vote) by running for local, state, and federal offices. They also revised laws that previously oppressed them and their ancestors. Despite having the right to vote, many African Americans would be restricted of this right by southern state governments, in the presidential election of 1787. The South used threats such as arrests, job loss, and payments of a poll tax to discourage African Americans from voting (Amar, 1996). This is significant because although African American men would have Constitution permission to vote, many of them would be unjustly denied this very right.

Plessy v. Ferguson Decision of 1896

Homer Plessy, an African American man from Louisiana, was denied equal protection of the Constitution when the Supreme Court ruled that the "colored" section of the train he refused to sit at was sanctioned by the state (Davis, 2004; Spring, 2016). The Court's decision supported segregation of all public facilities, such as schools, as long as the segregated facilities were equal in quality (Davis, 2004; Spring, 2016). The *Plessy* decision would severely impact generations of African Americans until the Civil Rights movement, of the 1950s and 1960s, when many of their Constitutional privileges, such as the right to an education, would be denied (Davis, 2004; Spring, 2016).

Brown v. Board of Education Decision of 1954

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision ended "separate but equal" (Spring, 2016). Until 1954, African American children, in K-12 schools. were subjugated to poor quality learning conditions (Chestnut & Chestnut, 2014). African American parents would file lawsuits challenging their child's right to the same facilities, curricula, equipment, and opportunities that White children enjoyed (Chestnut & Chestnut, 2004). *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954 reversed previous segregation practices that were in the *Plessy* decision (Carson, 2004). The impact of the *Brown* decision would propel African Americans to challenge remnants of Jim Crow policies, in the South, and demand passage of major civil rights legislations (Carson, 2004).

In 1964, the NAACP pressured the Supreme Court to quickly desegregate schools and President Lyndon Johnson assisted by refusing to fund school's educational programs under the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act (ESSA) if they did not obey the law (Ramsey, 2017). Post the 1954 *Brown's* ruling, many public school in the United States have become more desegregated with the majority of African American students and other students of color attending failing schools with few resources, poor facilities, and over-crowded classrooms (Ramsey, 2017).

Little Rock Nine

Resistance to equity in education continued past the *1954 Brown* case to Little Rock, Arkansas where President Dwight D. Eisenhower deployed federal troops to escort and protect nine African American students past a hostile, angry White crowd who protested their integration into Central High (Ramsey, 2017). After the educational

desegregation in Little Rock, more racial divisions in education, housing, and economic well-being emerged (Freeman, 2000). In 1958, Governor Faubus responded by ordering all public schools to be closed for the remainder of the school year. (Freeman, 2000).

The Current K-12 Pipeline

Decades following *Brown*, progressive school reformers saw the need to prepare all students with the right job skills that would propel them toward success in the corporate world (Labaree, 2010). The 2001 law No Child Left Behind failed to address many inequities that hindered many African American students, especially those of low socioeconomic status (Harper & Wood, 2016). According to Harper and Wood (2016), the United States "cannot afford to have a group as large as the current generation of Black boys to fall by the wayside because they miss early opportunities to develop critical language, literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills" (p. 11). Studying longitudinal data from students in kindergarten through the eighth grade, Stuhlberg and Weinberg (2011) report:

> The black-white test score gap widens during the elementary years, largely because the test scores of Blacks decline throughout elementary school. Test score disparities between children of the most and least educated parents start out larger than ethnic disparities, may narrow somewhat during the early grades, but remain large throughout elementary and middle school. (p. 15)

When considering the availability of quality pre-K, Head Start, or special education programs in the states of Georgia, Texas, Florida, California, and New York, Harper and Wood (2016) observed that, in 2010, nearly 37% of 4-year-olds and 90% of

3-year-olds, in Georgia, were not even enrolled. The data repeats itself, with 43% of 4-year-olds and 86% of 3-year-olds in Texas, 22% of 4-year-olds and 91% of 3-year-olds in Florida, 69% of 4-year-olds and 80% of 3-year-olds in California, and inadequate state funding hindered access to all eligible children in New York (Harper & Wood, 2016).

It is vital for school districts to overcome racial inequalities such as lack of resources and unqualified educators, which have caused achievement gaps between African American and White students (Stuhlberg & Weinberg, 2011). Every four years, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses the content knowledge of fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade students (Stulberg & Weinberg, 2011). Using data to examine possible errors in the school-to-prison pipeline, Stulberg and Weinberg (2011) reported that African American students' math and reading proficiency scored lower than over 75% Whites and Asian Americans. The researchers concluded that the achievement gaps contribute to the inability of highly selective colleges and universities to diversify their selection in the absence of affirmative action. While analyzing the NAEP data for the state of Georgia in 2011, Harper and Wood (2016) stated:

> Only 10% of Black boys, compared to 33% of their White male counterparts, were reading at or above the proficient level; only 10% of eighth-grade Black boys in Georgia, compared to 41% of eighth-grade White boys, were at or above the proficient level in math in that same year. (p. 46)

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that although the dropout rate from 2006 to 2017 improved from 11. 5 % to 6.5%, much work is still needed to improve the graduation rate of African American male high school students in

comparison to the 4.3% White, 3.9% Pacific Islander, and 2.1% of Asian students (2019). Stulberg and Weinberg (2011) noted that Whites were 4 percentage points more likely to apply to college than African Americans.

History of African American Men in Higher Education

The history of African American men in higher education is remembered for the number of men who were trailblazers and risk takers during a time when it was not esteemed by many Whites for African Americans to be educated (Stulberg & Weinberg, 2011). Despite institutionalized discrimination and institutionalized oppression, African American men jostled their way to educational equity (Anderson, 1988).

Access to Higher Education

Just as it was a challenge for African American children to enjoy the privileges of being educated in K-12, they also faced difficulties at the collegiate level (Anderson, 1998). Opportunities for higher learning were close to nonexistent for African Americans before the Civil War because, in the South, it was illegal for African Americans to be educated, and in the North, there was limited access to public schooling (Waite, 2001). However, there were some African American men who were able to obtain such success. According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (JBHE), several African American men would eventually flourish and gain access to higher education (*Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* [JBHE], 2006). For example, in 1799 John Chavis, a Presbyterian minister and teacher, was the first African American to attend American Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia (JBHE, 2006). Then followed

Alexander Lucius who was raised in New England where he had the opportunity to graduate from Middlebury College in Vermont, in 1823, and later became an educator and state legislator ("Buildings Named for Blacks at High-Ranking Colleges and Universities," 2005).

John Russworm was another African American who graduated in 1827 from Bowdoin College, Maine (Waite, 2001). Shortly after, in 1833, Oberlin College, in Ohio, allowed African American male students to attend (Waite, 2001). Recognizing a surplus of African American male graduates, Waite (2001) stated:

> It should be noted that about 70 percent of Oberlin's Black graduates went into the field of education. In addition, both Black and White teachers trained at Oberlin went south to teach during and after the Civil War. The admission of Black students to Oberlin was revolutionary for the time and had far-reaching positive consequences. (p. 347)

In 1836, Isaiah G. DeGrasse received a bachelor's degree from Newark College (now the University of Delaware) (JBHE, 2006). David J. Peck was the first African American, in 1847, to earn a degree from a medical college in the United States (JBHE, 2006). Later in 1850, Harvard, which was established in 1636 and built by slaves, accepted three African American students into its medical school, and in 1855, Kentucky integrated its Berea College allowing African American men to attend (JBHE, 2006). Notably, before the end of the Civil War, 40 African Americans had graduated from northern colleges and universities (JBHE, 2006).

The Establishments of HBCUs

Before and after the Civil War, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were created to provide freed slaves an institution to continue their learning as an alternative to the existing White colleges (Gasman & Nguyen, 2015). Many founders of HBCUs were White men who served the Northern army and worked with the Freedmen Bureau (Gasman & Nguyen, 2015). Despite the limited number of White students attending, HBCUs were created to serve a diverse population including foreigners from various countries (Gasman & Nguyen, 2015). The end of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of HBCUs (See Table 1).

Table 1

HBCUs Established Before and After the Civil War

College	Location	Year Established
Wilberforce University	Wilberforce, Ohio	1856
Fisk University	Nashville, Tennessee	1866
Howard University	Washington, D.C.	1867
Morehouse	Atlanta, Georgia	1867
Hampton Institute	Hampton, Virginia	1868
Tuskegee Institute	Tuskegee, Alabama	1881

Table 1 shows five HBCUs mostly located in the former slave states of the south, with the exception of Ohio. Refusing to be discouraged by racist laws before the Civil War or challenges that would await them afterwards, African American men became more determined to create higher institutions of learning for their race (Anderson, 1988). Anderson (1988) also notes:

> The Warrenton, North Carolina, *Gazette* observed in 1882 that 'relatively speaking' the Negroes were 'taking more interest in education and surpassing us

[whites] in gaining the rudiments of an education. They go to school every chance they get and shell out their money freely to pay teachers.' (p.282)

Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois are two of the most recognizable African American men that have tremendously impacted the quality of education African Americans should aspire after (Johnson & Watson, 2004). According to Johnson and Watson (2004), "To be on the same side fighting for the same purpose, progress, and uplifting of the Black race, these two Black intellectuals harbored radically divergent views on how to assist African Americans to free themselves from their often subhuman conditions" (p. 65). Although they both favored segregation for African Americans, their philosophy was not the same (Johnson & Watson, 2004; Spring, 2016). Washington believed that African Americans should build segregated industrial institutions that would train citizens to be hard-workers and self-sufficient (Mealiff, 2000; Spring, 2016). Du Bois believed that African Americans should be taught the same college curriculum as Whites to train future leaders who would serve their own community (Spring, 2016). Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute, believed that a curriculum that emphasizes manual labor and not classical studies would provide students with a better promise at life (Anderson, 1988; Mealiff, 2000; Spring, 2016). W. E. B. Du Bois's philosophy for African Americans in higher education and society would differ, as he believed their educational focus should lead them to fight for social and political justice (Anderson, 1988; Spring, 2016). Washington believed traditional education was useless and that through hard work, African Americans would learn a better work ethic and develop long lasting moral habits. Du Bois encouraged African Americans to become discontent with the social, financial, and political realities placed on them by White

Americans (Anderson, 1988; Spring, 2016). According to Johnson and Watson (2004), "Du Bois was adamant in his belief that intellectual guidance from the best and brightest among the Black race was the means by which to advance African Americans" (p. 69).

After the Civil War, African Americans began to take advantage of the new educational opportunity given to them by White northerners who advocated for their cause (Brown II & Yates, 2005). According to Brown II and Yates (2005), many of the White philanthropists view of education clashed with those of the African American community. Because many White missionaries and philanthropists believed that higher education was inappropriate and to too intellectually challenging for African Americans, HBCUs proponents began the construction of higher learning edifices (Brown II & Yates, 2005).

From the early nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, HBCUs were established with their mission being to educate African American students (Stulberg & Weinberg, 2011). HBCUs was also created as a safe haven to give African American students a sense of racial anonymity (Stulberg & Weinberg, 2011). Currently, there are 101 HBCUs across the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands (Anderson, 2017). Anderson (2017) stated, "Overall enrollment at these schools, including non-black students, has risen over the past several decades, albeit at a much slower rate than at universities overall (Enrollment at HBCUs section, para. 3).

Challenges

By the turn of twentieth century, higher education for African Americans had to overcome lack of funding, poor enrollment, and the establishment of national and

regional accrediting agencies that challenged their existence (Anderson, 1988). Anderson (1988) also stated that African Americans were caught in a quagmire between southern White planters who resisted universal public education for African Americans, and White industrialists who wanted African Americans disfranchised, kept in a lower-class status, but with limited universal education.

This tug of war over between White southerners and northern White industrialists over the educational interests of African Americans unfortunately continued until the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision, which would lead to the modern civil rights movement and the expansion of educational opportunities for all individuals (Anderson, 1988; Ramsey, 2017). The Jim Crow era, National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP), and Governor George C. Wallace, would have its impact on the noted progress and prison pipeline for African Americans.

Jim Crow

Jarrett (2013) stated that Jim Crow was an accepted institutionalized system of social segregation. The Jim Crow era, which originated as a governance network for local and state authorities to monitor and restrict the progressive gains of African Americans, received government support with the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision (Jarrett, 2013). Jim Crow's judicial and legal acts would be supported by the Supreme Court's ruling, which allowed states to legalize racial segregation in public facilities and institutions (Anderson, 1988; Jarrett, 2013).

The NAACP

According to Hamilton (1994), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is a major national African American organization that, since its founding in 1909, has had a dual agenda, civil rights, and progressive social welfare. The NAACP would champion the cause for African Americans when unjust local, state, or federal laws restricted their Constitutional liberties (Hamilton, 1994). As an active member of the NAACP, W. E. B. DuBois fought for the equity and quality of African Americans' education, particularly at the collegiate level (Spring, 2016). Hamilton (1994) concluded:

> The NAACP's philosophy was linked to the same currents of eighteenth-century liberalism that had given birth to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The NAACPs founders were concerned that the 'republican experiment is at stake, every tolerated wrong to the Negro reacting with double force upon white citizens guilty of faithlessness to their brothers.' The founders agreed to use every available means to publicize the neglected issues of civil and political equality for African Americans. (p. 454)

In an effort to offset damages caused by Jim Crow and White southerners who did not want African Americans attending their institutions, in 1930, leaders of the NAACP sued for equity of African American and White teachers, which also dismantled segregation in public universities and schools (Ramsey, 2017).

Governor George C. Wallace

George C. Wallace served as Democratic governor of the state of Alabama for four terms (1963-1967, 1971-1979, and 1983-1987) (JBHE, 1996; Slater, 1996). Remembered for his racist tactics during the early 1960s, the JBHE (1996) reflected:

> In 1962 Wallace made good on his pledge never to be "outniggered" again. His campaign slogan was "Vote right, vote white." He easily won the governor's chair. Wallace's inaugural speech included the infamous "segregation today, segregation tomorrow, and segregation for always!" a cry that will be remembered eternally in the annals of American politics and race relations. (p. 67)

The federal government had to intervene on several college campuses so that African Americans could attend (Slater, 1996). In June of 1963, Wallace would challenge President Kennedy's federal mandate for two African American students (James Hood and Vivian Malone) to enter the University of Alabama by keeping his campaign pledge to not integrate the school (JBHE, 1996). Although Wallace's pledge would not stand against federal orders, he would win the heart of many of America's racist conservatives prompting him to campaign for President of the United States (JBHE, 1996).

Noted Progress

Stulberg and Weinberg (2011) stated, "Higher education often has the profound ability to increase social and economic capital and serve as a tool of social mobility" (p.108). Policies enacted during the Jim Crow era and racist actions taken by local and state leaders were implemented to impede the progress of African Americans as they tried to climb the educational ladder (Naser, 1978).

Although African American men had to overcome many challenges to get an education, much progress has been made over the years. Naar (1978) reported, in 1976, that African Americans' college "enrollment jumped from 520,000 in 1970 to 1.1 million in 1976, while total enrollment increased from 7.4 million to 10 million" (p. 239). In order to correct the unfair practices of many public institutions, the Supreme Court began to rule in decisions that would reverse the discriminatory practices that have historically regressed African Americans' employment and educational social mobility. For example, in the 1978 Supreme Court ruling in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, affirmative action was upheld to allow race to be a determining factor in college admissions. According to Stulberg and Weinberg (2011), "Between 1960 and 1995, the percent of 25- to 29- year-old African Americans who earned a bachelor's degree increased by almost three-fold, from 5.4% to 15.4%" (p.110).

Although the percentage of African American men attending four-year colleges and universities has increased from 1980 to the mid-2000's, Harper and Wood (2016), declared, "Stagnant enrollments, persistent patterns of disengagement, and low college completion rates are among a handful of issues that compelled many campuses to launch mentoring programs…to improve student success" (p. 101). Through more research and appropriate steps taken by institutional leaders to understand African American male students, four-year colleges and universities will begin to witness a greater increase in their enrollment and graduation at higher institutions (Harper & Wood, 2016).

The Prison Pipeline

Despite the noted progress of African American males in higher education, there are still obstacles to be addressed that impact their educational attainment such as the prison pipeline. According to Gass and Laughter (2015), "In the United States, the prison population continues to grow due to 'tough on crime' policies like mandatory minimum sentencing and three-strikes and-you're-out. While crime statistics do not directly implicate K-12 education, they are historically related" (p. 334). Just as society has its "tough on crime" policies, many school systems implement zero-tolerance disciplinary practices that result in a high number of student suspension (Gass & Laughter, 2015). The social connotation that crime has an African American male face prematurely setup all African American men for failure (Gass & Laughter, 2015). Sojoyner (2014) argues,

> In light of the relationship among Black communities, city officials, police, and public education during the 1950s and 1960s there has to be a new analysis with respect to language, policy, and action pertaining to the school to prison pipeline. Not only is the concept of the pipeline invalid, it also removes the focus upon public education as the key historical agent that led to the expansion of prisons as a site of Black enclosure. (p. 65)

At the turn of twenty-first century, the Justice Policy Institute distributed a report titled *Cellblocks or Classrooms,* which rebuked efforts currently being made by state and federal governments to reduce funding for college and increase spending for the construction of more prisons (Toldson &Morton, 2011). The report rebuked federal and state governments for not providing reasonable resources to support African American

men attending colleges, but instead expanding their prison system (Toldson & Morton, 2011).

Toldson & Morton (2011) argued that more work should be done to encourage African American males to attend college and avoid prison. Efforts of improved high school counseling, mentorship for first year college students, sponsoring college tours, eliminating zero tolerance punitive measures in grade school, and shifting the focus of law enforcement toward violent crimes and away from nonviolent offenses would help change the narratives of many African American males as they make the necessary steps to improve their opportunities for a better life (Toldson & Morton, 2011).

The Current State of African American Male Educators in K-12

Despite the historical challenges which African American males experienced in both K-12 and higher education, their presence is desperately needed in K-12 institutions. Ryan (2006) states,

> For schools to promote cultures that foster inclusion, they will have to acknowledge the complexities of culture and be sensitive to the ends to which their efforts are directed. An inclusive approach to leadership demands that the efforts of members of the school community should promote everyone's interests—not just those of management or of dominant groups.

In an effort to meet the demand of an increasingly diverse student population and shortage of male teachers, many school districts across the United States are trying to recruit and retain qualified African American male teachers (Anderson et al., 2011). Since the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the percentage of African

American male educators has tremendously decreased (Meidi, 2018). Despite media and scholarly expert efforts to draw attention to this lingering issue, little to no improvement has been made in the recruitment of African American males as K-12 educators (Anderson et al., 2011). Currently, less than 2% of teachers in the United States are African American males (Erwin & Graham, 2011). With such a low percentage, there seems to be more research, litigation, and support done on the behalf of African American male teachers by policy makers, politicians, and educational scholars. According to Darling-Hammond and Berry (1999), "The need for far more teachers of color is especially critical if the United States is to create a teaching force that reflects its growing diversity" (p. 254). Griffin and Tackie (2017) added,

> The skills that Black teachers bring to their work often go far beyond their roles as content experts and instructors. As role models, parental figures, and advocates, they tend to build relationships with students of color that help those students feel connected to their schools. In the classroom, they tend to be 'warm demanders,' holding all students to high expectations, both academically and as members of a disciplined learning community. (p. 37)

Because most African American men teach in high-need schools serving low-income students of color, more support from school administrators and incentives to retain them is necessary to reduce the teacher shortage of African American male teachers in a K-12 school (Griffin & Tackie, 2017).

The College Pipeline

The NCES (2019) reported that "from 2000 to 2017, college enrollment rates increased for Black (from 31 to 36 percent) and Hispanic (from 36 percent) young adults. The rates in 2017 were also higher than in 2000 for White (41 vs. 39 percent) and Asian (65 vs. 56 percent) young adults" (p. 2). When analyzing community colleges completion rates, Harper and Wood (2016) state, "National data indicate that Black male completion rates are 41%, the lowest among all male groups; completion rates for other men are as follows: Asian Americans, 69.6%; Latinos, 50.3%; and Whites, 54.8%" (p.78).

According to Shapiro et al. (2017), of all the ethnic groups who started in four-year public institutions, African Americans had the lowest six-year completion rate (45.9 percent). At four-year public institutions, African American students also had the lowest completion rate (40%), and highest drop our rate (41.1%) (Shapiro et al., 2017). African Americans men comprise less than 6% of the entire U.S. undergraduate population and 70% do not complete a college degree within six years (Kim & Hargrove, 2013).

African American Educators in the Classroom Nationally

According to Griffin and Tackie (2017), "Black teachers comprise just 7% of the teaching population in the nation's public schools. Altogether, teachers of color represent 18% of the teaching force. Black students make up about 16% of the K-12 student enrollment" (p. 37). The authors also note that although school systems have made improvement recruiting African American male teachers, little has been done to retain them in the classroom over time (Griffin & Tackie, 2017). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2017), overall statistics portrayed 23% employed

were male and 77% females. When race/ ethnicity is accounted for, there are 80% White employed, 6.7% African American, 8.8% Hispanic, 2.3% Asian, 0.2% American Indian, 0.4% Alaska Natives, and 1.4% labeled two or more races employed (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017).

The NCES (2019) explained the importance of school's hiring teachers of the same race/ethnicity. It was reported that such recruitment can positively enhance students of color attitudes, motivation, and achievement. When analyzing the percentage distribution of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, by percentage of minority students in school and teacher minority status, the report concluded that the percent of minority teachers was highest when the student enrollment was 90% or more students of color and lowest at schools that had 10% or fewer students of color (NCES, 2019).

By studying the characteristics of public school teachers, it was noted that 89% of women compared to 11% of men were employed at the elementary school level, whereas at the secondary school level the gap shortened to 64% women and 36% men (NCES, 2018). The distribution of teachers by race/ethnicity varied by school classification because the report stated that more teachers of color were employed at public charter schools (29%) than traditional public schools (19%), and more White teachers were employed at traditional public schools (81%) than public charters (71%) (NCES, 2019). The percentage distribution of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, by school locale and teacher minority status, for the school year 2015–16, showed that African Americans were employed in the following locales: city (31%), suburban (18%), town (12%), and rural districts (11%) (NCES, 2019). African American teachers

compared to White teachers had more teachers who were employed lesser than three years (9 % African American vs 12% White) and Whites (24%) had more teachers employed with twenty or more years of experience than African Americans (19%) (NCES, 2019).

In analyzing the percentage distribution of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and highest degree earned looking at the school year 2015–16 report, NCES (2019) reported the following: Whites 40% to African Americans 37% reported a bachelor's degree as their highest degree, Whites 48% to African American 45% reported a master's degree as being their highest degree, African Americans 14% to Whites 8% reported an educational specialist degree as being their highest degree, and a higher percentage of African Americans 2% reported to having earned a doctorate degree to Whites 1%.

Although data shows gains made over the years for African Americans in the field of education, there is still a need to close the achievement gap in K-12 for African American students (Stuhlberg & Weinberg, 2011). Enrolling and graduating more African American men in college is necessary to recruit them as teachers (Stuhlberg & Weinberg, 2011). In order to increase the percentage of African American male teachers, a commitment by our national and state leaders to assist K-12 school leaders in closing the achievement gap and providing incentives to colleges and universities to enroll African American males in Teacher Education Programs must be treated as a major priority (Holton et al., 2019).

Challenges to Recruiting African American Male Teachers

Before *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas* (1954), African Male teachers proudly served their communities in multiple roles, but desegregation led to many of them losing their employment in schools (Meidi, 2018). Decades later, African American male students attended schools where they did not see male teachers of color and would likewise fail to choose a career in education (Meidi, 2018). Researchers predict that by 2040, the majority race in the United States will be people of color (Goings & Bianco, 2016). The human resource of many school districts is getting older and continues to be heavily dominated by White women. Throughout the twenty-first century, many urban school districts have been experiencing shortages in the employment of African American male teachers. According to Cowan et al. (2016), "While the number of teachers produced by teacher preparation programs has grown steadily since 1985, only about half of these teachers are hired" (p. 460). According to Apedoe et al. (2016), "While urban may typically be used to describe schools found in large metropolitan cities, it is also sometimes code for people or communities that are deemed as 'disadvantaged,' which foregrounds a negative, deficit view of the context" (p. 1170). Throughout the twenty-first century, many urban school districts have been experiencing shortages in the employment of African American male teachers. With White teachers comprising 73% of inner-city school employees, there is a need to diversify urban school districts (Brown & Butty, 1999).

The purpose of the *Brown* decision was to end the racial segregation of public schools and to provide equal opportunities for students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Because of segregationist and the racist policies of many states, many minorities

were forced to continue attending segregated schools where the class size was over-populated, buildings dilapidated, and funding was scarce (Ladson-Billings &Tate, 1995). In order to build diverse learning communities, Ryan (2006) stated, “all interests in the school community have to be fairly represented in these processes and everyone must have equally fair opportunities to influence the outcome of these processes” (p.16).

Additionally, after the *Brown* decision, the high school-to-college pipeline observed many minorities attending low-performing schools, being taught by less-qualified teachers, and being less-prepared for college (Madkins, 2011). Nearly 50% of African American males graduate high school, and of that number few choose the path of becoming a K-12 teacher (Bryan & Williams, 2017). After college, many African American males select other career fields. According to Madkins (2011), “Underrepresented minority students who currently attend college are generally not attracted to teaching as a career because of increased opportunities in other fields” (p. 420). In order to receive teaching credentials, many states require candidates to pass teacher examinations. New standardized testing practices such as *Praxis I* and *Praxis II* have also prompted many would-be teachers to steer away from the profession (Madkins, 2011). Only a few studies have explored the lives of African American male education majors and the failed relationships they experienced with their classmates and advisors, which turned them away from the teaching field (Golden, 2013).

There are less than 2% of African American male educators in urban schools (Hill-Carter, 2013). More significant effort across the nation must be made by school districts, colleges, and universities to recruit more African American male educators because the need for such teachers is valuable to support the academic and social

development of students of color (Bryan & Williams, 2017). Several state leaders have already begun collaborating with area colleges and businesses to offer incentives for Black men to choose a career in education (Holton et al., 2019). Just as important as regular education, more attention is needed in hiring African American special education teachers (Strosnider & Blanchett, 2003). According to Strosnider and Blanchett (2003), "Teacher preparation programs cannot wait until ethnically and diverse candidates choose special education as a career, pass entrance examinations and succeed in the program; they must be proactive" (p. 313). School leaders must be held accountable for creating diverse learning and working environments (Ryan, 2006). School leaders who recruit African American male teachers who are willing to teach in their own community can impact all students, especially Black male students (Anderson, et al., 2011; Browder & Bryan, 2013).

Beginning in early childhood education, more male teachers are needed (Browder & Bryan, 2013). Early childhood African American male teachers have the ability to empower African American students from making poor choices that may lead to them performing poorly academically, being labeled with learning deficiency, being suspended, or dropping out of school (Anderson et al., 2011; Browder & Bryan, 2013; Brown, 2012). According to Browder and Bryan (2013), "By having male teachers in early childhood, boys and girls could learn to abandon socially constructed ideas of gender-specific occupations" (p. 143). As more men enter the teaching profession, the negative stereotypes and perceptions of their motives to educate young children will diminish (Browder & Bryan, 2013). African American male educators who practice culturally relevant pedagogy is vital to reach a student demographic who comes from a

low socioeconomic status (SES) and is also considered at-risk (Bryan & Williams, 2017). Brown and Butty's (1999) state:

> The relationship between African American students and African American male teachers is a symbiotic one- that is, the number of African American males who go into teaching is influenced by the number of African American high school graduates and so on. Unfortunately, the pipeline that moves African American students from public school to public school teaching is a leaky one. (p. 282)

Unfortunately, African American male students have become the lead victims in the school-to-prison-pipeline (Harper & Wood, 2016). According to Harper and Wood (2016), "By investing in the early years ensuring- that young Black boys optimize opportunities and are supported as they transition through school we can disrupt generations of poverty and improve families, communities, and our country" (p.17). Harper and Woods (2016) also stated, " Education is a civil right; thus, we have to work to make our public schools places where adolescent Black boys can experience their full humanity and realize their full potential" (p. 56).

The current status of African American males in teaching comparison to African American male students in United States schools data reports that there are 7.39% African American male students and 1.81% African American male educators (Lewis, 2013). According to Lewis (2013), "Considering our brief examination of the pipeline to teaching for Black males, we understand from our pipeline analysis that we have to continue to encourage Black males to enter postsecondary options and pursue the field of education" (p.10). By encouraging more African American males to enter the pipeline to

teaching, school districts will have a more significant opportunity to recruit more K-12 instructional leaders.

National leaders and several colleges across the nation have implemented initiatives to recruit African American males to the teaching profession. President Obama and former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan introduced the initiative *Black Males to The Blackboard* to increase the number of African American males in 2020 by 5% to the teaching field (Bryan & Williams, 2017). Similarly, Clemson University in South Carolina, has initiated a recruitment program that is getting national attention called *Call Me Mister* (Bryan & Williams, 2017). According to Bryan and Williams (2017), "*Pathways to Teaching* is a precollegiate teacher recruitment program that provides Black males and other high school students of color experiences to explore teaching as a professional option" (p. 217).

In addition to recruiting African American men to college, it is also critical that they are retained in college (Fullard, 2019). Fullard (2019) recalls a successful program to retain African American males in college and hopefully recruit them in the teaching field. According to Fullard (2019), "The Black Male Initiative (BMI) was founded at SUNY Empire State College (ESC) in 2009, with the mission of increasing retention and persistence through degree completion. Successfully reducing the graduation rate gap is an example of educational social justice in action" (p. 121). In explaining how successful the program was at retaining African American males in college. Fullard (2019) states:

> BMI at ESC will continue to grow, increasing the number of black males who complete degrees, and reducing the graduation gap between Black males and other groups. The value of academic learning for youth and adults—and creating

> a reverse pipeline for Black males from the criminal justice system to higher education—are critical to reduce the effects of the mass incarceration crisis, and provide a pathway to gainful employment and community contribution. Based on the positive results of the BMI program at ESC Metro Center, SUNY has expressed the intention to replicate the program at other campuses such as Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany. (pp. 129-130)

Another strategy to recruit African American males to the teaching field was for teacher preparation programs to partner with university athletic departments (Byrd et al., 2011). Teacher programs should employ the same strategies athletic programs use to recruit star players to participate in the school of education programs (Byrd et al., 2011). Just as college programs heavily recruit star athletes to their institutions, the same effort is needed for federal and state government leaders to champion the cause and provide economic incentives to attract African American males to education (Graham, 1987). The federal government is being asked to "develop aid programs, perhaps analogous to the G.I. Bill or the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, that would pay for the college or graduate education of Blacks who would subsequently teach" (Graham, 1987, p. 604).

Studies have discovered that African American male educators have not been heavily recruited because of the socio-historical and societal expectations of them (Jackson et al., 2013). The media's negative portrayal of African American men has distorted their image as moral, law-abiding citizens (Jackson, Boutte, & Wilson, 2013; Meidi, 2018). Recent attention has been given to the murder of an African American high school student, Trayvon Martin, who was mysteriously murdered for wearing a hoody over of his head while he was walking home from his neighborhood convenience store

(Dance, 2015). For months, the narrative described by the media was divided as some reporters painted Trayvon Martin as an innocent child, while other networks labeled him a thug that deserved his fate (Dance, 2015). Dance (2015) notes:

> The Trayvon Martin case is for many a twice-told tale, just one more instance of the unjustifiable murder of an innocent young Black boy and the lack of justice in the American justice system. As the folk often say, "Justice in America means just us (Whites)." This was the express situation when Africans were transported here as slaves, with early laws in most states decriminalizing almost anything a White person did to a Black and criminalizing anything a Black did to a White. (p.148)

Jackson et al. (2013) also state that "the image and perception of Black males as criminals is pervasive and widespread in contemporary society. The terms 'Black males' and 'thugs' are erroneously perceived as being synonymous" (p.120). The critical role African American men play in the lives of students of color is key to helping these students overcome the negative experiences they are faced with in urban K-12 schools (Golden, 2013). According to Jackson et al. (2013), "While people hold multiple and sometimes contradictory identities, this paradox regarding Black males as both thugs who are dangerous and superheroes who lead fashion and entertainment trends and who have the potential to powerfully impact schools is worth probing" (p.119).

Several barriers make teaching undesirable for African American men. Some men reported feeling unappreciated because as students, they recalled their teachers having meager expectations for them, and they felt unwanted (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Many also believed that teacher reforms took away teacher's autonomy, the fear of falsely being

labeled a pedophile, and not earning enough income to provide for one's family led several to other professions (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Sleeter (2017) states:

> Critical Race Theory helps to expose various ways in which processes and structures of teacher education that purport to be color blind in fact serve to perpetuate Whiteness in teacher education. State policies, tests to enter and/or exit teacher education, and the design of programs that presume full-time students on a university campus all work to maintain Whiteness. (p.162)

According to Goessling and Rice (2005), many male students who enter college will bypass the field of education because of the lack of male teachers they had as role models. The researchers also stated African American males may have had the most challenging experiences due to the intolerances of their teachers. The devastation of not recruiting African American male teachers negatively impacts African American male students (Scott, 2016). In the field of special education, where many African American children are inappropriately identified, many African American male children receiving services would have limited engagement with a African American male teachers (Scott, 2016). He also stated that Black male children must navigate learning, behavioral, and social issues without a culturally experienced minority role models (Scott, 2016, p. 42). As we can see, there is a need for school leaders to recruit more African American males. Students will tremendously benefit from their cultural and intellectual contributions.

Challenges to Retaining African American Male Teachers

School districts across the nation not only have challenges recruiting African American male educators, but they also have issues retaining them into the profession.

Nearly 25% to 30% of novices leave teaching within five years in the field (Brown & Butty, 1999). School districts serving mostly historically marginalized students tend to have the highest turnover rate (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Compared to other professions, turnover is higher in education and also affects novices more than veterans (Hobson, Harris, Buckner-Manley, & Smith, 2012). Pabon (2014) states that during the interview stage, African American men are stereotyped as the enforcer, disciplinarian and not instructional expert of his content.

High stakes testing and more stringent licensure benchmarks have contributed to the turnover rate for many new African American male educators (Going & Bianco, 2016). Many students, including African American males, have failed both Praxis I and Praxis II, which focuses on content and pedagogy (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Praxis I focuses on students' skills in math, reading, and writing, whereas, Praxis II examines their content, pedagogy, and knowledge of educational theory and application (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Due to the difficulty of the exams, many African American males are prevented from entering the teaching field or are forced to stop teaching until they can successfully pass (Goings & Bianco, 2016).

Irvine (1988) states that "teacher preparation programs should provide all prospective educators with the information necessary to pass minimum competency tests" (p. 511). Irvine (1988) further argues that the field of education should take proactive political and educational stances to prevent the high number of African American from failing racially motivated competency tests which negatively impact their tenure on the job.

African American male novice teachers are a valuable asset to any educational organizations (Gholam, 2018). A novice educator is thought to have served less than five years in the profession (Gholam, 2018). Many novices are expected to fulfill the following duties in their first year in the classroom: maintain classroom routines, practice rigorous and relevant pedagogy, work collaboratively with other teachers, and communicate regularly with parents (Gholam, 2018). A competitive salary and positive working conditions will motivate minority teachers to the remain in the teaching field (Kearney, 2008). However, a lack of self-efficacy has caused many novices to leave the teaching profession (Lotter et al., 2018). According to Bandura (1993), "A strong sense of efficacy enhances personal accomplishment in many ways. People with high efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided" (p. 144). In order for novice teachers to effectively contribute to student learning, they must strengthen the academic optimism credentials that would help them to build trusting relationships with students and parents, establish collective efficacy with colleagues, and increase academic press with students (Hoy & Miskel, 2006).

Siwatu et al. (2017) conducted a study to evaluate novice teacher's ability to implement culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM) self-efficacy to manage one's learning environment and use its data to correct failed practices. Some of the characteristics of teachers engaged in the CRCM include the following: maintaining a positive and trusting relationship with students; creating a warm, secure learning environment; understanding students' cultural and behavior norms; communicating with parents; and setting high behavior expectations. In an effort to retain novice African American male educators, pre-service teacher programs and K-12 school leaders must

provide the needed supports and guidance to help strengthen their performances (Bryan & Ford, 2014).

Many teachers lack the necessary confidence they need to lead instruction. Teacher's high self-efficacy is an important attribute of effectively teaching and helping students succeed (Basile et al., 2009). It is vital for novice teachers to receive the necessary support they need so they can develop their craft. School leaders should consider partnering highly motivated mentors with novices who will support, observe, and offer the required feedback they need to strengthen their pedagogical skills (Basile et al., 2009; Gholam, 2018; McQueen & Ronfeldt, 2017). Hobson et al. (2012) reported that, "turnover is higher in teaching than in other professions and that turnover is higher among beginning teachers than among other teachers" (p. 69). Teachers who had mentors from the exact same grade-level, and subject matter, and who attended induction activities, were more content, taught with more rigor, and remained in the teaching profession longer (Hobson et al., 2012).

Institutional tensions and microaggressions have discouraged many African American males from remaining in the teaching field (Bryan & Browder, 2013). People commit microaggressions when they make subtle, unintentional acts or statements against members of a marginalized group (Sue et al., 2007). Bryan and Browder (2013) also note that "racial and gender microaggressions also contribute to such unwelcoming and uncomfortable feelings as they occur day-to-day in overt and covert ways" (p.153). Schools can create conscious and inclusive learning communities when they provide opportunities for ideas to shared and diverse ethnicities effectively communicate with one another (Ryan, 2006). Bristol (2017) contrasts the experiences of two groups of African

American male teachers identified as Loners and Groupers. The author defines Loners as those working in schools with one African American male teacher and Groupers with four or more. The author also states that the men's skin color prompted their White colleagues to fear and refuse to collaborate on school issues. Bristol (2017) also states:

> An analysis of this nonrepresentative national sample of teachers suggested that Black men are "pedagogically isolated" in the schools where they teach. Black male teachers were less likely to ask for support even when they needed help with their practice; in addition, they described their colleagues as less likely to offer them support unless the Black male teachers explicitly asked for it. (p. 6)

Isolated workplaces and racial putdowns are some of the negative practices contributing to the exodus of many African American male educators (Goings & Bianco, 2016). According to Kearney (2008), "Retention of African American teachers is vital in providing role models for children, especially ethnic minority children. Providing incentives and offering assistance of support and guidance may affect retention of recruited teachers" (p. 625). Kohli (2016) conducted a qualitative study that examined the racial experiences of African American teachers in hostile and color-blind work environments. When addressing microaggression and the hostile working environments African American male teachers sometimes work in, Kohli (2016) stated that African Americans go above and beyond the call of duty to support all students. Despite their determination to serve all students, African American teachers disapprove of the negative, racial, and hostile working environments that have impeded their professional growth (Kohli, 2016).

Supporting African American Male Teachers

Qualitative data demonstrate that male teachers have a positive impact on male students' academic and recreational lives, especially when they lead students in academic press (Martin et al., 2010). According to Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017), "The quality of supports likely matters as much, if not more, than the number of supports" (p. 407). Novices who remained in the teaching field did so because of the following induction supports supportive communication, seminars, collaboration with teammates, receiving a mentor from the same field, and having a teacher aide (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). According to Ronfeldt and McQueen (2019), "Being assigned a mentor seems to be better than being assigned no mentor at all; but some kinds of mentors and mentoring are likely to have a stronger impact on retention than other" (p. 407). A mentor is a veteran teacher who supports novices during the early years of their profession (Gholam, 2018). African American male novices need effective teacher mentoring programs to help them explore, reflect, and develop as they perfect their craft (Gholam, 2018). According to Warren (2013), the field of education needs more African American male educators and school leaders who will support academic abilities of all students. School districts that diversify the teaching field to serve a more diverse student population must also properly train, mentor, and support African American male novice teachers so they can effectively serve the many challenges facing twenty-first century learners (Warren, 2013).

Many African American male teachers reported receiving little to no professional support to enhance their practice (Bristol, 2017). Supporting the pedagogies and practices of African American male teachers is vital to helping students achieve (Pabon, 2014). African American male teachers are equipped with the necessary beliefs, attitudes, and

personalities needed to support the minority learner (Hill-Carter, 2013). Researchers have observed African American male teachers using the three pedagogical practices of being the enforcer, playful, and negotiator to connect and support the learning of minority students (Pabon, 2014).

Several researchers believe it is important for African American men to work and be supported in urban school districts (Anderson et al., 2011; Bristol, 2017; Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Anderson et al. (2011) believe that African American male teachers should be equipped with both pedagogical and content knowledge or they would be deficient in their delivery of teaching students of color. They also believe that Black male teachers, who wanted to teach a culturally relevant curriculum, needed to teach with passion, help students develop necessary skills, hold students to high personal and academic expectations, and make learning relevant (Anderson et al., 2011, p. 360). In an attempt to express the necessity for African American male teachers, Quigley and Mitchell (2018) state:

> To this end, we call for the recruitment, retention, and training of teachers who are not only content experts, but also committed to and adept at fostering positive racial identity and Critical Race Consciousness for African American males because they themselves embody Critical Race Care and Critical Race and Cultural Consciousness. (p. 92)

It is essential for school leaders to understand that African American male teachers are gifted with ability to challenge the minds of their students just like their colleagues of other races.

African American male teachers reported that their colleagues solicited their support mostly for classroom management concerns than curriculum and instruction (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Bristol and Mentor also report that simply being Black and male are not the only factors contributing to their success with student behavior. The researchers also describe how the participants in their study "built relationships with students and got to know them as individuals" (2018, p. 231). School leaders who limit the role of African American male teachers to simply policing students also limit their ability to grow cognitively and pedagogically. All teachers should have the opportunity to show evidence of their ability to successfully lead sound instruction and assist administrators with decision making leadership tasks (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Escoffrey et al. (2014) interviewed two Black retired male teachers from the post-Jim Crow era in Mississippi. In their study, the two teachers explained how they felt responsible for their students' social and educational development. Escoffrey et al. (2014) state that the participants in the study "likewise both perceived education to be about life rather than just about content knowledge" (p. 8).

According to Ladson-Billings (1995), "Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 160). Ladson-Billings add that "culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers attend to students' academic needs, not merely make them 'feel good.' The trick of culturally relevant teaching is to get students to 'choose' academic excellence" (p.160). Bryan and Williams (2017) also defend the need for culturally relevant teaching

by stating that African American teachers who possess culturally relevant qualities empower African American male students to succeed academically.

Most African American male teachers enter the teaching field with the intention to inspire students to believe in themselves, take risks, and achieve lofty goals. Brown and Butty (1999) believe that "school districts should establish support systems that encourage and assist minority teachers to continue their education and professional growth in the field of education" (p. 290). According to Erwin and Graham (2011), "Black men see teaching as an opportunity to correct social, political and even economic barriers that prohibit African Americans from success. As such, African American men teachers tend to teach in ways that attempts to end racial inequality" (p. 399). Many African American male teachers enter the teaching field to reverse the maltreatment they have seen other African American male students go through as students (Erwin & Graham, 2011). Diversity in instruction was also a motivator for more African American male teachers, as they saw the need to erase the invincibility of African Americans in the content area (Erwin & Graham, 2011). In an effort to change the narrative of African American men socially, politically, and culturally, many have chosen to uplift their race through teaching. As new teachers enter the teaching field, school leaders should encourage risk-taking and innovative pedagogical practices that will engage all learners. Supporting and providing appropriate professional development to African American novice teachers will empower them to help students achieve more, grow as future instructional leaders, and inspire other African American males in their community to choose education as a career.

With so many inner-city students, especially minority students experiencing unfortunate difficulty in structured environments, many researchers agree with the idea of hiring more African-American male teachers who can relate with students and act as better disciplinarians (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brockenbrough, 2015; Erwin & Graham, 2011). Brockenbrough asserts that there is a need for "more critical considerations of how Black male teachers negotiate the pressures to serve as role models, father figures, and disciplinarians for Black students" (p. 502). In many urban schools, African American male teachers are forced to be disciplinarians first and instructors second (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Bristol and Mentor state that, instead of being supported by their supervisors to practice culturally pedagogical instruction, "in these urban schools, comprised mostly of children of color from historically marginalized communities, the Black male teachers said that their peers routinely expected them to monitor and punish misbehaving students" (p. 228). Although African American male teachers are asked to fulfill such roles as mentors, father figures, disciplinarians, and coaches, they are most needed as gifted, special education, and pedagogically sound educators (Bryan & Browder, 2013; Rice, 2005). Instead of being limited to the deficit constructions of "savior" and "superman," African American male teachers must be allowed to teach employing a culturally responsive approach to connect to students (Bryan & Williams, 2005, p. 219). In order to serve a more diverse student population, educators must express cultural solidarity with their students by caring and holding them to a standard of excellence (Ryan, 2006). According to Cole (1986), as students begin to see more African American male teachers, they will have more respect for them as competent professionals. The lack of African American male teachers not only affects the African

American community, but also the economic and social development of our nation (Cole, 1986).

African American Educators in Alabama

Particular to this study is the state of African American male educators in Alabama. Currently, there is hardly any data that indicate the number of African American males presently employed as K-12 urban teachers. The lack of research in this area direct attention for the need to recruit and retain qualified African American male teachers throughout the state.

Although a diverse work environment can benefit all students, in the state of Alabama, data reports how challenging it is for African American students to have an African American teacher, especially for African American males (Crain, 2017). According to the NCES (2012), in the state of Alabama, there are 78.8 %White, non-Hispanic teachers, 18.6 % African Americans, and 0.5% two or more race, non-Hispanic. Crain (2017) reports that of the 46,773 total teachers in the state of Alabama, only 9,046 (19%) are African American. Most of the African American teachers work in the urban school districts of Montgomery County, Mobile County, Jefferson County, Birmingham City, Bessemer City, Huntsville City, and Tuscaloosa City (Crain, 2017). In the state of Alabama, African American teachers work in school districts where 90% of their students come from low-socioeconomic homes (Crain, 2017). With such a miniscule percentage of African American teachers employed at the national and state level, it is essential that government leaders and school board representatives provide the necessary incentives to diversify and broaden the educational pipeline empowering

African American males to rise through the ranks as successful K-12 students, educational degree aspirants, and successful teachers (Stulberg & Weinberg, 2011).

Summary

From the first time African Americans touched foot in the United States to the end of the Civil War, they were denied the right to be treated equally as White Americans and the opportunity to be educated (Span, 2005). Although African American men built Harvard University and other Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), their attendance was severely limited by restrictive state laws (Spann, 2005; Spring, 2016). During the post-Civil War and Jim Crow era, African American men had to overcome more political, social, and educational challenges that were aimed to prevent any signs of progress and racial barriers that stood in their way from enjoying the rights and privileges declared to all American citizens in U.S. Constitution (Spring, 2016). Since the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the percentage of African American male educators has tremendously decreased (Meidi, 2018).

Numerous educational literature studies draw attention to the need for school leaders to implement practices that advocate overcoming challenges recruiting African American male teachers, retaining African American male teachers, and conducting practices that support African American male teachers. With White teachers comprising 73% of inner-city school employees, there is a need to diversify urban school districts (Brown & Butty, 1999). African American male novice teachers are a valuable asset to any educational organization (Gholam, 2018). A lack of self-efficacy has caused many novices to leave the teaching profession (Lotter et al., 2018). Bristol and Mentor (2018)

state that, instead of being supported by their supervisors to practice culturally pedagogical instruction, “In these urban schools, comprised mostly of children of color from historically marginalized communities, the Black male teachers said that their peers routinely expected them to monitor and punish misbehaving students” (p. 228). With attrition being extremely high in the field of education, it is essential that the pipeline from school-to-teaching be nurtured as early as the primary grades (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Many African American males choose other professions or leave before their fifth year because of negative experiences matriculating through primary and secondary school and the lack of support from their colleagues (Goings & Bianco, 2016). According to Bryan and Bryant (2013), “African American males bring a multiplicity of talents and abilities to the classroom from which all children can benefit” (p. 154). As a recommendation to enhance the practice of recruiting, retaining, and supporting African American male teachers, Pabon (2014) suggests that the induction phase before and after becoming a teacher enhance its preparation of African American male teachers because so many were not prepared for the classroom. Pabon also suggests that effective mentoring was key to retain them longer in the profession. Bristol (2017) mentions the importance of school districts conducting training related to school-based experiences related to race, gender, and sexuality. Bristol states the need for senior district administrators to “organize racial/ gender awareness training for school-based administrators” in an effort to create more of an equitable workplace (p.13). As teachers increase the confidence they have in their ability teach the un-teachable and build trust with parents, school districts across the nation, they will witness the improved achievement of our twenty-first-century learners (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). As school

districts improve their practices to recruit, retain, and support African American teachers, more men of color will enter the profession bringing along with them their cultural experiences to enhance student learning.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Over the past twenty years, United States school districts have been trying to overcome the shortage of highly qualified teachers in urban K-12 schools (Erwin & Graham, 2011). Problems such as low teacher pay, gun violence in schools, and uncooperative parents are just a few of the reasons why the teaching profession struggles with teacher recruitment and retention (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Despite these concerns, school leaders are vigorously selecting and supporting teachers who will help all students achieve excellence in the classroom. Over the past three decades, there has been a noticeable shortage of African American male teachers in the field of education (Madkins, 2011). School leaders have been trying to close this gap by recruiting more men of color, especially African American men, and retaining novice teachers (Browder & Bryan, 2013). According to Meidl (2019), hiring more African American men will help to improve at-risk, low-performing African American students of color classroom performances.

Attrition is one of the reasons many novice educators have left the teaching field (Gholam, 2018; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014; McQueen & Ronfeldt, 2017). Inadequate pre-service and in-service training, poor instructional feedback, lack of resources, and lack of mentoring have been noted as some of the reasons why teachers dismiss the idea of being instructional leaders (Gholam, 2018; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014; McQueen & Ronfeldt, 2017). After college, many African American males choose

other careers instead of education (Brown & Butty, 1999). By entering other professions, African American men have been unable to assist at-risk African American male students who struggle with academic and behavioral challenges, dropping out of school, and criminal behavior (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Goings & Bianco, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this critical narrative inquiry was to share the stories of African American/Black male K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in central Alabama. The research question that guided this study is: how do African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigate their own educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in central Alabama?

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is defined as any type of research which produces findings that does not come from statistical or quantifiable means, but from the research of lives, lived experiences, or behaviors of participants (Rahman, 2017). Qualitative researchers collect non-standardized data and analyze texts and images rather than number and statistics (Rahman, 2016). When discussing the importance of qualitative over quantitative research in education inquiry, Klehr (2012) states that quantitative data provides numerical insight in subgroup trends, but qualitative data complements numerical statistics by providing more evidence from the lived experiences of participants in a study.

Some of the advantages of qualitative research are that it: (a) produces the thick description of participants' experiences, (b) provides the relationship of information processing with performance, (c) encompasses a wider range of epistemological

viewpoints, research methods, and interpretive techniques, (d) has the ability to understand different people's voices, meanings and events, and also (e) allows the researchers to discover the participants' inner experience and to figure out how meanings are shaped (Rahman, 2017). Klehr (2012) mentions:

> When choosing methods appropriate to their questions, teachers frequently tap qualitative methods and interpretive processes to observe, document, and analyze classroom practices and student learning. Attending to the naturalistic conditions and multiple layers of classroom life demands a subjective, holistic, and flexible approach. Teaching journals are common data sources, as are field observations, interviews, media recordings, analyses of student work, surveys, and conversations with colleagues. (p. 123)

For this study, the qualitative research method was crucial for understanding how African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigated their own educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in central Alabama. Through this study, participants' voices were heard as they provided counternarratives to accepted truths placed on them by society and institutions, which have been created by the dominant culture. Participants not only gave voice to their lived experiences, but they also empowered administrators and policy makers to create change within policies and practices to provide avenues for more African American/Black males to come into the role of a K-12 teacher. The qualitative approach that was taken in this research was critical narrative inquiry. Under the narrative umbrella, critical narrative inquiry took on an ontological and epistemological role, and it also "provides a framework for

deconstructing the stories and exploring assumptions about knowledge, power, and reflexivity" (Hickson, 2016).

Critical Narrative Inquiry

Narrative researchers gather stories to describe the lives of specific individuals (Casallas, 2017). Critical narrative researchers gather stories to describe the lives of specific individuals and then deconstruct those stories in order to explore "assumptions about knowledge, power, and reflexivity" (Hickson, 2016, p. 380). According to Creswell & Poth (2018), "Narrative stories tell of individual experiences, and they may shed light on the identities of individuals and how they see themselves" (p. 69). Narratives can be gathered through observations, documents, or interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). They can also be analyzed thematically, structurally, dialogically, or visually (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers who use a narrative approach usually retell the narrative of the participant in chronological order similar to the style of most literature books (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using a narrative approach was advantageous for this study because it gave voice to a group in society that is almost extinct in the field.

Narrative researchers listen, transcribe, and analyze the lived and told experiences of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There are advantages and disadvantages when using the narrative research approach. Some of the advantages are: it is best for collecting the life experiences of one or a few individuals; participants can journal their own stories; the transcription phase can witness the researcher as listener or questioner; and the researcher and participant collaborate throughout much of the narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Some of the disadvantages are: the vast quantity amount of information that must

be collected from the participant; collaboration with the participant requires the researcher to be reflective about their own bias relating to the topic; and "collecting, analyzing, and telling of individual stories" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.73) can become an issue of power relations.

Qualitative researchers using the narrative approach may use narrative inquiry (NI) and/or critical narrative inquiry (CNI) as preferred research methodologies (Heilmann, 2018; Hickson, 2016). NI requires that the researcher understand the experience of their participants by re-storying or retelling the information learned from the interview (Heilmann, 2018). NI researchers, according to Rosiek and Snyder (2018), "are encouraged to engage in a process of examining the stories that give their work and lives meaning and then to engage in a process of restorying their lives" (p. 7).

When critical reflection is aligned with NI, researchers will be able to appreciate the many influences on their own background and deconstruct participants' stories looking through the lens of knowledge, power, and reflexivity (Hickson, 2016). This critical reflection is what makes the research a critical narrative inquiry (CNI). CNI allows the researcher to deconstruct participants' stories while examining the historical, cultural, and social influences that also influence their lived experiences (Hickson, 2016). According to Cannella et al. (2015), CNI also "provides possibilities for thorough exploration of power inequities and oppression which, upon deep analyses and reflection in the research process, may provide unrealized recommendations for social change across policy, programmatic, and various other areas in education" (p. 152). As I explored the lived experiences of African American/Black Male K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama, I deconstructed the narratives of my

participants by using critical narrative inquiry. With CNI, I was able to analyze my participants' stories through the lens of knowledge, power, and reflexivity. By paying attention to the historical, cultural, and social influences that have influenced my participants' experiences, I was able to interpret and make meaning of their lived experiences.

Theoretical Framework

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "Theories or theoretical orientations … are found in the literature and they provide a general explanation as to what the researcher hopes to find in a study or a lens through which to view the needs of participants and communities in a study" (p. 18). For this study, I have chosen Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as the lenses to understand the lived experiences of African American/Black Male K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama. The two theories provided insight into the conditions and experiences that have affected African American male K-12 novice educators.

Critical Race Theory

CRT is a theoretical framework which examines society and culture as they relate to race, law, and power (Buchanan, 2015; Cole, 2012; Darder, 2011; Harper et al., 2009; Solorzano, 1997; Tate, 1997). Originating in the 1960s and 70s under the concept of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), CRT fought for justice, liberation, and economic empowerment for African Americans (Cole, 2012; Tate, 1997). The concept began in the 1980s to provide justice to legal issue on race (Buchanan, 2015; Cole, 2012; Darder,

2011; Harper et al., 2009; Solorzano, 1997; Tate, 1997). Some of the key contributors to the theory are Derrick Bell, Patricia Williams, Kimberle Crenshaw, Camara Jones, and Richard Delgado (Buchanan, 2015; Cole, 2012; Darder, 2011; Harper et al., 2009; Solorzano, 1997; Tate, 1997). Studied in the fields of education, law, and ethnic studies, CRT's goal is to educate the world about the impact and consequences race and racism has had on marginalized citizens in the United States and best practices to achieve racial equality (Cole, 2012; Tate, 1997).

In the field of education, African Americans had to endure racial stereotypes placed on them by the dominant culture, which also affected them politically, scientifically, and religiously (Tate, 1997). According to (Tate, 1997), "Some of the earliest studies with educational implications centered on the intellectual assessment and school achievement of African American and other ethnic minority students" (p. 199). It was believed that African Americans were genetically and biologically inferior to Whites (Tate, 1997). Tate (1997) also states:

> Whites are an intelligent, diligent, and deserving people; Blacks are a simple, lazy, and undeserving people. These socially constructed representations of subjective identity have categorized specific groups of society in terms of perceived abilities to think logically and justified the construction of oppressive social policy and law that reflect these categories. (p. 200)

The following are the five themes that provide the perspectives and research methods of CRT: (a) the Centrality and Intersectionality of race and racism argues that race is endemic and permanenting society; (b) the Challenge to Dominant Ideology argues that CRT challenges the color-blindness and race neutrality of laws the serve the interest and

privileges of the dominant groups in the United States; (c) the Commitment to Social Justice argues for the abolition of racism; (d) the Centrality of Experiential Knowledge argues that the knowledge of African American men and women is legitimate and they are validated through the use of storytelling, family history, parables, or narratives to share their lived experiences; and (e) the Interdisciplinary Perspective argues that race and racism should be incorporated into schools' curriculum and pedagogy to educate citizens about the impact of race and racism and how to eradicate its role institutionally (Solorzano, 1997). According to Solorzano (1997), the three points of racism are "(1) one group believes itself to be superior; (2) the group which believes itself to be superior has the power to carry out the racist behavior; and (3) racism effects multiple racial/ethnic groups" (p. 8). Based on the three points of racism, it can be assumed that racism is about institutional power which has been denied throughout history to African Americans (Solorzano, 1997). Darder (2011) states:

> Over the last half-century considerable attention has been paid to issues related to "race" and "race relations" in the social sciences, humanities, and legal studies. The debates intensified first with the groundbreaking *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954 and then again with the civil rights movements of the 1960s. The current debates are beginning to intensify once more as critical race theorists not only retain the idea of "race" but further entrench it as a central category of analysis. (109)

Through the narrative and storytelling method, CRT proponents believe that Eurocentrism and White privilege can be rectified (Darder, 2011). It is important that urban educators reflect, communicate, and write about their own positionality about race

and colorblindness, beginning in the primary grades (Buchanan, 2015). By being transparent, educators can remove barriers that negatively impact students and adults of color.

Just as it is important for African American K-12 students to have quality instruction and access to highly qualified educators, they also should not be denied access to a rigorous, challenging education at a higher institution of learning (Harper et al., 2009). According to Harper et al. :

> CRT was useful for illustrating how various policy decisions have caused African Americans to essentially take three steps forward and two steps back over the lifespan of higher education. Unfortunately, progressive change has not occurred vigorously since the 1970s. This should concern public policymakers as it poses troublesome implications for the economic and sociopolitical status of African Americans. Increasing access to the public good of higher education is beneficial to everyone-public interests converge when more Americans across racial/ethnic groups earn college degrees and assume societal roles that enhance global competitiveness, decrease crime and poverty, and help the U.S. enact its espoused democratic ideals. (2009, p. 410)

Consistent attacks on affirmative action and funding inequities have negatively impacted HBCUs and access to colleges and universities for African Americans (Harper et al., 2009). African Americans have suffered great loss since their arrival to the Americas in 1619 (Carson, 2004; Chestnut & Chestnut, 2004; Tate, 1997). By studying the tenets of CRT, it is assumed that the inequities of the legal and judicial system will go through the process of annihilation and African Americans will truly enjoy the benefits of

the nation's laws written in the Constitution and Declaration of Independence (Carson, 2004; Chestnut & Chestnut, 2004; Tate, 1997).

Social Cognitive Theory

Known as the father of cognitive theory, Albert Bandura is credited for creating the Social Learning Theory (SLT) in 1962 and the Social Cognitive Theory in 1986 (Nabavi, 2012). When describing the SLT, Nabavi (2012) stated,

> This theory is based on the idea that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. Separately, by observing the behaviors of others, people develop similar behaviors. After observing the behavior of others, people assimilate and imitate that behavior, especially if their observational experiences are positive ones or include rewards related to the observed behavior. (p. 5)

SLT posits that learning evolves from observing, imitating, and modeling (Nabavi, 2012). Over the years, SLT became known as the SCT. SCT added "individuals learn both behaviors and cognitive strategies by observing the behavior of others, and these acquisitions can be learned without being directly reinforced" (Nabavi, 2012, p.12). Bandura wrote about the self-efficacy of teachers. He states that "Self-efficacy is learned through a variety of experiences and is dynamic; it can change over time as new information and experiences are acquired" (Hoy & Miskel, 2013, p. 162). Nabavi (2012) states:

> Self-efficacy beliefs exert their diverse effects through cognitive, motivational, emotional, and decisional processes. Efficacy beliefs affect whether individuals think optimistically or pessimistically, in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways.

> They play a central role in the self-regulation of motivation through goal challenges and outcome expectations. (p. 15)

Based upon the SCT, it is assumed that individuals with high efficacy are more likely to view challenges as something that can be mastered and individuals with low efficacy are more likely to provide less effort and avoid challenging tasks (Nabavi, 2012). Individuals who have a history of success in a skill or act tend to have higher efficacy beliefs, whereas repeated failures tend to lower individuals' efficacy beliefs (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 2007; Nabavi, 2012; Williams, 2010).

Artino (2012) mentions the importance of teachers being knowledgeable in their content and pedagogy, but not having the conviction and confidence to perform their duties can negatively impact their ability to enhance their competence as a teacher and student learning. Bandura also states, "Teacher efficacy is the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Miskel & Hoy, 2013, p. 163). In order for teachers to have high efficacy, the following goals should be followed: (a) set clear, specific goals; (b) encourage the use of challenging and proximal goals; (c) receive honest, explicit feedback; (d) possess a realistic, accurate perception of their ability for a given task; and (e) use peer modeling to increase one's self-efficacy (Artino, 2012).

According to Miskel and Hoy (2013), "Self-efficacy expectations develop from a variety of sources, including performance feedback, previous history, and social influences. However, four primary sources of experience- mastery experience, modeling, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal- are postulated for self-efficacy" (p. 160). The most influential source of efficacy is mastery experience (McKenna, 2014). Mastery

experience is the authentic experiences of individuals where successful experiences raises one's efficacy and failure lowers their self-efficacy (McKenna, 2014). In a qualitative study of four middle school students, research was conducted to explore their levels of efficacy in a math assessment (McKenna, 2014). Two students who demonstrated high levels of achievement had higher efficacy as they performed high on formative and summative assessments, whereas two performed poorly and were noted as having low efficacy (McKenna, 2014).

Witnessing others successfully complete a task can improve one's level of self-efficacy (Miskel & Hoy, 2013; Wilde & Hsu, 2019). When describing modeling or vicarious experience, Wilde and Hsu (2019) state that individuals who observe others successfully complete a task provides hope as the observer's self-efficacy is raised with the confidence that they can also master the task.

Positive communication has its effects on individuals, especially those who are trying to overcome challenges or have low confidence in their ability to perform a task (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). In agreement, Elshatarat et al. (2016) state, "Verbal persuasion is referred to as informing individuals of their capabilities of mastering the given behavior. Verbal persuasion is the influence of the suggestions of others on efficacy beliefs, in particular, persuasion given by those in authority who have special knowledge" (p. 4). Verbal persuasion helps to boost the confidence of individuals as they try to accomplish their goal (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

Anxiety and stress are some of the physiological states that affect one's efficacy (Britner & Pajares, 2006). Britner and Pajares (2006) also state that individuals with high

self-efficacy expect success when they have positive feelings about a task or situation and lower self-efficacy when they feel stressed, anxious, or afraid.

As I explored the lived experiences of African American Male K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama, it was imperative that I listened to the stories told from my participants. By combining CRT and SCT into the framework of my investigation, I was able to get rich narratives and insight of their educational journey and experiences as African American male novice educators.

Philosophical Assumptions

As a qualitative researcher, I understood the value and importance philosophical assumptions had on my research. I also understood that my perspective or world view impacted the direction of my research. Philosophical assumptions affected how the researcher sought information to answer research questions and study research problems (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, I utilized the following four philosophical assumptions: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology.

Ontology

According to Dieronitou (2014), "Ontology traces its meaning from the ancient Greek present participle ων/on/ which means 'to exist.' Therefore ontology in the social world is taken to mean the kinds of things that exist" (p. 4). Ontology states that there are multiple realities and there is not one correct reality (Dieronotou, 2014). According to Scotland (2012), "Ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality, in

other words what is. Researchers need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work" (p. 9). Scotland also states:

> The ontological position of interpretivism is relativism. Relativism is the view that reality is subjective and differs from person to person. Our realties are mediated by our senses. Without consciousness the world is meaningless. Reality emerges when consciousness engages with objects which are already pregnant with meaning. (p. 11)

As a qualitative researcher using the ontological approach, it was necessary that I report different perspectives as themes using participants actual words and presenting many perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As I interviewed my participants, I expected to get a clearer understanding of their experiences as they shared their stories. As I interviewed my participants, I was able to gather many meanings about the phenomenon from my participants, detect patterns in their narratives, and through induction identify themes.

Epistemology

According to Dieronitou (2014), "Inquirer takes a subject-subject posture whereas facts and values are inextricably linked. Hence, since the knower and the known are inseparable, research is value-bound" (p. 7). According to Scotland (2012), "Epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge can be created, acquired and communicated, in other words what it means to know" (p. 9). Scotland (2012) also states:

> Knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed in and out of interaction between humans and their world and are developed and transmitted in a social

> context. Therefore, the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of individuals who are participating in it. (p. 12)

In this study, I anticipated spending quality time with participants to gather as much evidence needed to learn of their lived experiences. The qualitative researcher must collaborate in the field and rely on specific quotes from participants. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "The longer the researchers stay in the field or get to know the participants, the more they 'know what they know' from firsthand information" (p. 21). I gathered knowledge through the use of semi-structured interviews from my participants as they shared their experiences.

Axiology

As I attempted to bring value to my research topic, I made values known by admitting the value-laden nature of the content I collected from the field and honestly reported biases that shaped the narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In his study, Tomar (2014) states:

> The branch of Philosophy concerned with the general problem of values that is, the nature, origin, and permanence of values-is called Axiology. Axiology focuses on questions about what 'ought to be.' It deals with the nature of values and relates to the teaching of moral values and character development. Most philosophers include, as subdivision of axiology, Ethics, the branch of Philosophy that is concerned with morals; and Aesthetics, the branch that is concerned with the problems of beauty and art. (p. 51)

Values and moral obligation are two of the axiological traits that researchers bring to a study (Sabucedo et al., 2019). Moral obligation is the ethical responsibility or the belief that one must act according to their own values (Sabucedo et al., 2019). In this study, I shared my ethical obligation as a researcher, social position, personal experiences, and professional beliefs as an African American male educator. The ethics of care was demonstrated as I allowed African American male teachers the opportunity to provide a counternarrative and give voice to the lived experiences they encountered along their educational journey (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

Methodology

According to Scotland (2012), "Methodology is the strategy or plan of action which lies behind the choice and use of particular methods. Thus, methodology is concerned with why, what, from where, when and how data is collected and analyzed" (p. 9). Smith and Small (2017) state:

> Research methodology encompasses a broader conception of the process of the research process whereas research methods, in a narrow sense, refers to the research instruments. Some scholars confuse research methods (e.g. data collection methods such as interviews, questionnaires or focus groups) with research methodology (e.g. phenomenology, ethnography, critical theory, grounded theory, etc.). (p. 202)

Research methodology is the principle that informs a research study, and research method describes the actual procedures used to collect and interpret data (Smith & Small, 2017). In this study, the methodological approach I used was Critical Narrative Inquiry

(CNI), and the Theoretical Frameworks that guided my research are Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). The importance of CNI was that it allowed the researcher to deconstruct participants' stories while examining the historical, cultural, and social influences that also impacted their lived experiences (Hickson, 2016). From the semi-structured interviews and narratives of the participants in my study, I combined CRT and SCT into the framework of my investigation. This allowed me to explain how the social construct of race and the levels of self-efficacy impacted the educational journey and experiences of African American male novice K-12 teachers in an urban school district in Central Alabama. As a qualitative researcher, it was important that I used inductive logic by working with details before generalizations, describe in detail the context of the study, and continually revise questions from experiences in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 20).

Positionality (Role of the Researcher)

As a qualitative writer, it was essential that I ethically include my experience in this inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also as a qualitative researcher, the writing "cannot be separated from the author, how it is received by readers, and how it impacts the participants and sites under study" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 228). Below, I discuss how I maintained reflexivity and disclosed my positionality to this research.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity exists when the writer includes their biases, values, and experiences in their research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While reflexivity, as a process, is the

introspection or reflection of one's role in the research process, as a concept, it entails self-awareness (Palaganas et al., 2017). Creswell and Poth (2018) agree that it is important to write reflexive comments throughout the study, and they also state:

> Reviewing and then discussing how biases, values, and experiences impact emerging understandings is actually the heart of being reflexive in a study, because it is important that the researcher not only detail his or her experiences with the phenomenon but also be self-conscious about how these experiences may potentially have shaped the findings, the conclusions, and interpretations drawn in a study. (pp. 229-230)

According to D' Silva et al. (2016), "Reflexivity is premised on the idea that reality is socially constructed, and knowledge is context-based and historically situated" (p. 96). As a qualitative researcher, I used reflexivity to explore the interpretations of my own research and analyze its effects on my educational background, values, and experiences (D' Silva et al., 2016). Ethics, richness, trustworthiness, and clarity are some of the benefits of reflexivity (Probst, 2015). Probst (2015) also concludes:

> Reflexivity is an important tool that enables the researcher to stay engaged in critical self-awareness throughout the research process. It is the embodiment of an epistemology in which the knower is always present, a way of looking that gazes outward at what is taking place while sustaining an inward gaze at the looker.

Positionality

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "How we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we

bring to the research. All writing is 'positioned' and within a stance" (p. 228). As a qualitative researcher, it is important to be transparent with participants about one's positionality (Bourke, 2014). Qualitative researchers must be prepared to balance objectivism and subjectivism when writing about their position in the research (Bourke, 2014). Therefore, as I told my story, I wrote about my social background, ideological assumptions, and feelings throughout the research process. Carter (2014) states:

> Revealing self through storytelling is a vulnerable, but valuable act, which can unearth the researcher's positionality and inner self. By making the substance of one's self and story explicit, we better understand how the researcher approaches research questions, interactions with participants, and data, all of which ultimately shape emergent findings and discussions. (p. 13)

The position that individuals hold in society, as well as their identity construction, cultural background, socioeconomic status, and education, are some of the markers that influence their research (D' Silva, et.al., (2016). Also, according to D' Silva et al. (2016), "whether one is an 'insider' or 'outsider,' or even the degree to which the researcher confers upon or experiences such status, may influence participants' views of the researcher and how researchers view their study participants" (p. 97). As I explored the lived experiences of African American male K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama, I used my "insider" status as an African American male educator to gain access to willing participants as they provided narratives of their experiences within the field of education. Also, through this research, I hoped to use my role as a cultural broker to advocate for support and improve efforts to recruit and retain African American male novice teachers in an urban school district.

I am an African American male educator employed in an urban school district in the southeastern region of the United States. Like most novice teachers, I entered the teaching profession believing I could empower and motivate students to love learning. I have served in the education field for 21 years: fifteen as a History teacher and currently six as an administrator. My educational journey began years ago as a student in elementary school. I was born and raised in the Black Belt of Alabama, where historical civil rights marches took place and the Ku Klux Klan presented itself as opposition to the progress being made by African Americans. My first three years of primary school were very challenging. From first to third grade, my teachers were White females who I perceived as being impatient with their students (predominately African Americans), grumpy, and uncaring. My third grade teacher requested that I go through the procedures to be placed in special education because of my poor grades and inability to perform well in class. Thankfully, I was not identified as having a learning disability. I began to experience academic success during my fourth and fifth grade years under the leadership of caring, supportive African American female teachers. They took the time to connect to my learning challenges and helped me believe that I could achieve. From middle to high school, I won awards for my academic achievements.

Because of my academic success, I spoke to my high school counselor (a White female) about being placed in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. She recommended that I not take that route out of fear that I would fail and also because hardly any African Americans were taking such challenging courses. My parents signed documents allowing me to change my schedule, which placed me in the program. I was determined to prove

my counselor wrong. I would go on to make great grades and pass my AP exams to earn college credit.

As a student, I was always determined not to fail and to prove naysayers wrong. I continued my academic feats, and throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies, I maintained a 4.0 Grade Point Average (GPA). During my undergraduate studies, I was motivated to become an educator. I was inspired by my tenth and twelfth grade AP History teachers who were very knowledgeable and supportive as teachers. In addition, my father, step-mother, and uncle were educators. They encouraged and supported my journey to become a teacher. I was fortunate to have great relationships with all of my college professors who encouraged, supported, and championed my academic successes.

With the support of one of my professors and a church member, I received help finding a teaching position immediately after graduation. My first three years were met with pedagogical challenges, as I had to overcome little to no coaching from my supervisor, no mentoring, and little to no support from my colleagues. My first few years as an educator were also frustrating as I learned how to strengthen my classroom management strategies and develop my pedagogical and content knowledge of history. Being one of three African American male teachers in a school dominated by White women, I accepted the challenge to develop my craft and improve my students' ability to learn. As a teacher, I was not chosen to serve on school committees, nor was I asked to participate in any school-related programs like other teachers. I felt powerless and voiceless for many years. My motivation for staying in the teaching field was to prove my worth to my colleagues and supervisors. Years later, with the support and motivation

of two content specialists who believed in me, I became a National Board Certified Educator in Adolescence Social Science and was named teacher of the year three times.

As an educator, I have been in district and state professional development trainings where I witnessed few to no African American male teachers. I believe it is crucial for students of all color to have a diversified staff contributing to their academic growth. Many African American male students have never had an African American male teacher (Milner, 2018). The first African American teacher I had was my seventh grade pre-algebra teacher. The second and last African American male instructor was my tenth grade AP History teacher. The lack of African American teachers negatively affects African American/Black male students' relational and academic performances (Milner, 2018).

During my first three years in the classroom, I felt invisible, voiceless, and unsupported. Quality mentoring encourages most teachers to stay in the field and improve their practice (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). I was encouraged to withstand the challenges I faced through my determination to prove others wrong by believing in myself. High quality teachers would remain in the teaching field if they were adequately developed and mentored (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Milner, 2018; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). I believe most teachers enter the field because they genuinely love teaching and they love children. I am convinced that with consistent mentoring and support, African American males in urban K-12 schools will be motivated to improve their craft.

Research Protocol

This protocol was a guide for the steps I took as I explored how African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigated their own educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama. The protocol provided a methodological framework for how African American/Black male novice teachers participated in the study. In the following sections, I discuss how participants were identified and how data was collected. I also discuss how data was transcribed, analyzed, organized into themes, and stored. I conclude with the importance of adhering to ethical policies in research.

Participant Identification

In qualitative research, the size of the participant pool is usually smaller when compared to the participants in a quantitative study (Sargeant, 2012). According to Sargeant:

> Subject selection in qualitative research is purposeful; participants are selected who can best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study. Hence, one of the most important tasks in the study design phase is to identify appropriate participants. (2002, p. 1)

A 19-question semi-structured interview protocol was created for this study, including demographic questions (e.g., education, years in service, ethnicity). The interviews were open-ended and online. The online platform Zoom was utilized due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Seven participants were recruited through purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009). The participants were African American/Black male novice K-12

teachers selected from an urban school district in the state of Alabama. Their ages ranged from 24-37. Six participant interviews lasted approximately one hour; one interview lasted fifty minutes.

Because of the nature of this study, participants were selected from an urban school district in the state of Alabama. In order to protect the identity of participants and guarantee confidentiality, I assigned each individual a pseudonym. Participant characteristics can be seen in Table 2, including pseudonyms and relevant demographics.

Table 2

African American/Black Male Novice K-12 Educators

Pseudonym	Age	Years Employed	Position	School-level	Race	Mentor
Branell	37	4	Band	High Sch.	Afr. Am.	No
Bydee	24	2	ELA	Middle Sch.	Afr. Am.	Yes
Dehuff	25	2	Band	Elementary	Black	No
Jerry	24	1	Science	Middle Sch.	Afr. Am.	Yes
Anthani	37	2	History	High Sch.	Black	No
Hese	34	2	ELA	Middle Sch.	Afr. Am.	Yes
Tall	25	2	Special Ed.	Elementary	Afr. Am.	No

Data Collection

Sutton and Austin (2015) declare, "Whatever philosophical standpoint the researcher is taking and whatever the data collection method (e.g., focus group, one-to-one interviews), the process will involve the generation of large amounts of data" (p. 227). In order to gain access to the participants for this study, I made connections with identified gatekeepers from the school district where my prospective participants were employed. Sometimes known as guardians, the role of a gatekeeper is to protect the

interest of participants in a study (Gallo et al., 2012). My school district's human resource office and principals within the district served as my gatekeepers.

Flyers were dispersed to identified gatekeepers who had the prospective participants (See Appendix A). Next, I called/emailed prospective participants (See Appendix B). Willing participants received an email with a Qualtrics survey to gather more demographic information from them (See Appendix C). Once consent was collected, I set up a time to interview participants at a location of their choice (See Appendix D). All seven participant interviews were conducted online via Zoom. Zoom is one of the world's most used online video communication platforms (Radigan, 2020). Interviews lasted up to 1.5 hours. I conducted interviews utilizing semi-structured interview (SSI) questions (See Appendix E). According to McIntosh and Morse (2015), "The SSI is designed to ascertain subjective responses from persons regarding a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced" (p. 1). I took field notes to document environmental factors and non-verbal cues for clarity when transcribing data. The SSI allowed participants to respond freely to open-ended questions and gave the researcher liberty to probe the participants' responses (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). I assigned pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of participants during the study. After transcription of the interviews, participants were given the option to review, confirm, add, and return to the Principal Investigator (PI).

Data Analysis

After the interview process, it was important to transcribe participants' interview data and organize it into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the following sections, I identify the steps taken for data analysis.

Transcriptions

From the recorded devices and field notes used during the interview process, I transcribed participants' narratives verbatim. Creswell and Poth (2018) state, "The data collected in a narrative study needs to be analyzed for the story they have to tell" (p. 198). Using the narrative approach, researchers need to be great listeners and note-takers. After reflecting on the conversations of participants, it was necessary to identify codes that describe the experiences the selected African American/Black male novice teachers have shared. A narrative researcher must analyze data by creating and organizing data files, reading texts, making margin notes, forming initial codes, and describing the patterns across the objective set of experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.199).

Hinter (2010) also states,

> In narrative analysis, texts are analyzed within their social, cultural, and historical context from many different perspectives. They are deconstructed in order to reveal 'powerful discourses, hierarchies, presuppositions, deliberate omissions and polar opposites.' Narrative analyses are usually based on large units of texts or biographical stories and the moral and transformational dimensions of storytelling are explored. (p.4)

After recording the interview, I used a qualitative management program called NVivo 12 to transcribe the data and later categorized them into codes and themes. Ozkan (2004) states that NVivo, a qualitative software package, supports many qualitative researchers as they code rich text-based data. Just like any other software, NVivo requires time learning the software, and it does not guarantee users are protected from crashes or work not saved (Ozkan, 2004).

Thematic Analysis

After transcribing, qualitative researchers examine the structure data should be organized (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Alhojailan (2012), "Thematic Analysis is a type of qualitative analysis" (p. 40). It is used to analyze classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data (Alhojailan, 2012). Narrative researchers should identify and describe the stories into a chronology, locate epiphanies within stories, identify contextual materials, and re-story and interpret the larger meaning of the collection of stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 199). Nowell et al. (2017) state:

> Thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights. Thematic analysis is also useful for summarizing key features of a large data set, as it forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handling data, helping to produce a clear and organized final report. (p. 2)

After transcription, I began to analyze the data. I read each participant's transcripts several times, making annotations to gain a deeper understanding of the lived

experiences told by each participant. Notes were recorded in the margins as I tried to make sense of my participant's stories, my own reflections, and any epiphanies. When reading or writing, the learner sometimes discovers epiphanies, also known as a sudden insight or manifestation (Amos, 2018). My notes and the discovered epiphanies were constantly reviewed as I reread participants' annotated transcripts.

Next, I created a table to organize my findings. The table was divided into three columns. The first column contained actual statements from my participants. The second column contained codes (nodes) in NVivo 12 from notes gathered from my review. The third column contained themes that emerged from the compiled data of the first two columns. I was able to discover consistent themes from my combined coding within NVivo 12 software and the repeated ideas and epiphanies from participants' transcripts.

Researchers should carefully transcribe, analyze, and identify themes from participants' stories (Nowell et al., 2017). I categorized participants' themes according to epiphanies, or turning points where the story line noticed a sensational, climactic change (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I utilized the process of peer-debriefing with my chairperson throughout this study to expose my analysis of the research and to develop an audit trail and a reference for methodological decisions (Nowell et al., 2017).

Data Storage

According to Lin (2009), "Proper data management allows researchers to accumulate information in various forms or locations for different research purposes, while maintaining the security of the data. There is little published information about managing data generated in qualitative research studies" (p. 132). Lin (2009) also adds,

"Topics in qualitative data management include, but are not limited to (1) confidentiality, (2) human subjects' protection, and (3) data storage, sharing, and ownership" (p. 133).

In this study, participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities. The PI had access to identifiers such as participants' emails and IP addresses. The PI contacted and responded to participants utilizing their UAB assigned email accounts. No data was collected through email. Email correspondence was only utilized to recruit, provide the Qualtrics link, and set initial appointment for participant interviews. All emails were deleted after correspondence was completed. IP addresses that were made available through the Qualtrics survey responses when downloaded to an Excel document was deleted prior to being saved. All documents utilized the participants' assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality of participant ID for data collected. The pseudonym key sheet was saved in an encrypted/password protected Excel document by the PI on his computer; upon completion of the study, this document will be deleted. When not in use, the computer will be stored in a locked cabinet.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers must anticipate and take proactive measures to avoid violating the ethics of their research. When doing qualitative research, ethical considerations involve the following: "Seeking college approval, gaining local access permissions, disclosing the purpose of the study, and refraining from pressure for participants into signing the consent form" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 55). Participation in this study were voluntary, and there was no need for compensation for the participants' time given to this study because it was of no cost. Participants were informed that the principle of voluntary

participation require that people not be coerced into participating in research. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw at any point throughout the process. Taking part in this research was not part of their work or duties. The participants were informed of their rights to not participate or withdraw before the completion of the study. I informed them that this research would be kept separate from their work. Participants were notified that although there would be no direct benefit to them, their participation could lead to a better understanding of the experiences of African American/Black Male K-12 novice educators in urban school districts. Participants were told that there would not be any risks to their participation nor loss to their confidentiality. This study was approved by the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Office of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Use and also the my school district's Board of Education Department of Assessment, Accountability, and Research (See Appendix F). I followed the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) interview protocol, I informed my participants that the data collected and analyzed, as a result of their participation, would be kept in a secure location assessable to both the researcher and faculty advisor. Participants were told that they would be informed of research results published for scientific purposes; their identity would not be given out. All interview tapes and transcribed communications between the researcher and the participants would be kept locked, and all electronic correspondence would remain on a password-protected device.

Summary

The purpose of this Critical Narrative Inquiry (CNI) is to explore how African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigated their own educational journey to

become K-12 educators in an urban school district in central Alabama. The research question for this study is: How do African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigate their own educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama?

There has been a shortage of teachers, especially African American/Black male teachers, over the past twenty years (Madkins, 2011). Scholars insist that recruiting and supporting African American/Black male teachers would positively impact low-performing African American/Black students of color classroom performances (Browder & Bryan, 2013; Erwin & Graham, 2011; Meidl, 2019).

This study took the CNI approach of deconstructing participants' stories while examining the historical, cultural, and social influences that also impacts their lived experiences (Hickson, 2016). Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) as my theoretical framework, I was able to explore the rich narratives and insights of African American/Black male novice teachers as they shared their educational journeys and experiences. By carefully exploring my participants narratives ontologically, epistemologically, axiologically, and methodologically, I was able to get a clear understanding of their lived experiences as novice teachers.

Using reflexivity, I was able to share with participants my role in the research, such as my biases and beliefs. The participants in my study were selected through purposeful sampling. After gaining access to participants, I was able to secure their consent and other valuable information for interviewing. For 1.5 hours, participants were engaged in semi-structured interviews. Following the interviews, data was carefully transcribed and analyzed. I ensured that participants were informed of their rights

throughout the study. As I followed the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) interview protocol, participants were informed that the data collected and analyzed, as a result of their participation, would be kept in a secure location assessable to both the researcher and faculty advisor.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In the poem “Life is Fine,” Hughes expressed his view of the essence of life. Hughes notes, “Life is fine,” and “I went down to the river, I set down on the bank. I tried to think but couldn't, So I jumped in and sank” (Rampersad & Roessel, 1994, p. 358). In the work, Hughes shares his struggles with the extremes of both wanting to live and wishing to die. From slavery to the pre-years of the Civil Rights Movement, Hughes writes about the mental frustrations that he and other African Americans experienced as they tried to coexist with white Americans in the United States. Thoughts of suicide were common for many African Americans, as they saw life not worth living (Rampersad & Roessel, 1994). For example, Hughes writes, “I came up once and hollered! I came up twice and cried! If that water hadn't a-been so cold, I might've sunk and died” (Rampersad & Roessel, 1994, p. 358). Hughes continues to discuss other moments when he was on the verge of ending his life, until he reaches an epiphany: “Though you may hear me holler, And you may see me cry— I'll be dogged, sweet baby, If you gonna see me die” (p. 358). As the writer fluctuates from the extremes of wanting to live versus wishing to die, he reaches an epiphany (a moment of revelation). He concludes that despite the struggles life has presented to him, the drive to live is more important.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the lived educational journey of seven African American/Black male K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in

Central Alabama. By using a qualitative, critical narrative inquiry approach, participants were able to recount their personal experiences in the field of education and describe their realities through the phases of being recruited, retained, and supported as highly qualified teachers whose goals are to enhance student learning. Through their critical narratives, participants revealed the turning point or epiphanies of their lives that changed their dislike for school as a student and later empowered them to become educators. The participants' epiphanies inspired them to become change agents and to provide their students a more intentional and quality education.

Through their narratives, participants were able to articulate their views regarding power, race, and gender roles in the field of education, provide a counternarrative to the stereotypes placed on African American men by the dominant culture (Brown & Butty, 2019), and offer observers the opportunity to develop an appreciation and understanding of the social and cultural experiences of African American/Black male novice teachers. Through the lens of CRT and SCT, their lived experiences were examined and given voice (Artino, 2012; Bandura, 2007; Nabavi, 2012; Solorzano, 1997; Williams, 2010). As the researcher, I am hopeful that school administrators and policymakers will become empowered to initiate policy changes and practices that will open the door for African American/Black males to become K-12 teachers.

Context

Seven individuals were selected to participate in this study. These individuals self-identified as African American/Black males and served as Band, English Language Arts (ELA), Science, History, and Special Education teachers. All participants are

novices employed in an urban school district. As defined in Chapter 1, a novice is considered an educator, usually with less than five years of experience (Sezer, 2017). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), an urban school district is identified based on Census Bureau data as a school that sits inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population of 250,000 or more (2006). Because of its size, urban school districts are diversified with a large enrollment and an increased number of minority students (Yavuz & Gulmez, 2018).

Introduction to the Participants

Mentors, advocates, volunteers, educators, life-long learners, and disciplinarians were some of the words the participants used to describe themselves. Although they had different backgrounds and K-12 experiences, they were all united in their quest to grow as learners and improve achievement for all students. Their journeys to evolve as educators were truly remarkable and inspiring, considering the odds several of the participants had to endure and overcome. The conversations I conducted with the participants occurred over a two-month period in the summer of 2020. The stories told by the participants were alarming, heart-touching, and inspiring. These men demonstrated great sincerity and passion as they shared personal stories describing their K-12 journeys as students, the triumphs and challenges they faced while in college, and their current roles as educators.

Participant 1: Branall

Branall is an African American high school band director entering his fourth year as a band teacher. He was preparing for a concert while we were interviewing. Branall grew up with a love for music, and he played the trombone as a middle and high school student. He remembers attending failing K-12 schools where there were few resources to help to students be successful. He was very angry as he recalled not having enough books to complete assignments given by his teachers. Only having two African American male teachers in his K-12 schooling was an issue that motivated him to join the teaching profession so other African American students could have a male representative leading and inspiring them to achieve.

In college, Branall was met with more challenges. Because of his lack of preparation, Branall suffered academically, as he was forced to master content such as reading and math that he struggled with while in K-12. His motivation came from the only African American teacher he had in college, his band teacher. His band teacher would offer encouragement and hold Branall accountable for his course work. There were many times Branall wanted to quit school. He was frustrated with his lack of money; failure to pass the Praxis, an exam required for teaching certification (Rice & Alexakis, 2015); and lack of self-confidence.

After completing college, he was fortunate to get a teaching position on an emergency certificate. According to Mobra and Hamlin (2020), “Emergency certification generally allows bachelor’s degree holders to become classroom teachers without any other formal training aside from an expectation to meet alternative certification requirements at a point in the future” (p. 3). The certificate would grant him enough time

to pass his Praxis. After his third attempt, Branall finally passed the Praxis. He recalled feelings of joy because he was able to overcome his nemesis of test taking. Now as an educator, he is disappointed with the mentor that was appointed to him. He described his mentor as unprofessional, vengeful, and unsupportive. Branall had several thoughts of leaving the profession. He was required to attend professional development to assist with his struggles with classroom management and band. He was appreciative of the required training but felt that some of the sessions were irrelevant for his content. Currently, Branall is working on a master's degree in Educational Leadership. He aspires to become a school administrator. His goal is to have a greater impact in the lives of students and to be more of a positive influence for students who have to overcome some of the same struggles he had during his K-12 journey.

Participant 2: Bydee

Bydee is an African American male novice teacher. He is entering his second year as a middle school ELA teacher. Bydee was elated to participate in the interview. As he shared his story, it was evident in his voice that he loves the teaching profession and his students. His K-12 experience was a positive one filled with supportive teachers. He was not discouraged by the fact that he only had one African American male teacher. Although most of his teachers were white males or African American women, he was thankful that they were nurturing, supportive, and prepared him well for college. He remembered making excellent grades and was chosen as a student leader by his school administrators.

Bydee attended an Historical Black College and University (HBCU). Because he was well-prepared academically in high school, his college experience was also successful, as he continually made the Dean and President's list. He praised his professors for being supportive and caring. Because he attended an HBCU, most of his teachers were African American. He complimented his three African American male teachers for being very articulate, knowledgeable, and kind. As he began to talk about the challenges he experienced as a college student, Bydee took two deep breaths and began to describe his process gaining licensure and certification. He explained that many of his colleagues had difficulties passing the Praxis, but he and a few close friends were blessed to pass on their first attempt. He and many of his educational cohort members were required to pass not only the Praxis, but also the Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA). In order to become a fully certified teacher, one must pass the edTPA. He learned toughness and resilience as he completed his assessments.

Bydee had no challenges in landing a teaching position. He passionately stated that his goal as an educator is to inspire and teach life applications related to his ELA content. He believes that education was more than just teaching the pages of a book, but life applications. He bragged about the supportive supervisors, colleagues, and mentors who supported his growth. Bydee is thankful for the professional development he received. He has used his training to help perfect his delivery of content and improve student data. Although he believes in student discipline, Bydee wants to prove that solid instruction can impact student behavior. Bydee anticipates remaining in the teaching field for years to come, but he has aspirations to serve as a school administrator and positively impact a greater number of students' lives.

Participant 3: Dehuff

Dehuff was only one of two participants who identified as Black, not African American. He is of African American and Creole descent. Dehuff is a second-year band teacher at an elementary school. He is the first of his family to graduate from college. Dehuff recalled being bullied his in K-12 educational years because he was gay. He painfully described how students would harass him and how he received little protection from his teachers. He admitted that growing up he felt awkward because of the lack of a father figure or male role model in his life. While he was in middle school, he met a band teacher who was also gay. His band teacher encouraged and supported his academic performance. In high school, he continued to gain self-confidence and make new friends. This would contribute to his losing 349 pounds, making new friends, and graduating with honors. He eventually graduated with a band scholarship and attended an HBCU, where he continued to thrive.

Dehuff had six African American K-12 and college instructors. He remember how patient and supportive they were of him. He anguished as he expressed his displeasure for the Praxis exam, which he had difficulty passing. Sadly, he shared that many of his classmates were forced to change majors because they could not pass the test. However, his love for music and the support he received from his professors prompted him to persevere, successfully pass the Praxis, and earn a teaching position.

As a teacher, Dehuff describes himself as a hard worker receiving a vast amount of support from his principal and colleagues. He is respected by his peers, students, and parents. He envisions remaining in the teaching profession for several years because he loves teaching music and he loves supporting his students.

Participant 4: Jerry

Jerry is an African American novice entering his second year as a middle school science teacher. He is excited to serve students at the same school he once attended. Jerry recalls a positive K-12 experience. He considers himself fortunate to come from a two-parent home that valued education and to have had teachers who taught him how to succeed in life. Jerry encountered support from eight African American male educators who he acknowledges for his current success.

College was not optional in Jerry's household. His parents made the financial sacrifices to support his college experience. He attended two Predominate White Institutions (PWI) on a baseball scholarship, which helped him pay for his school dues and books. While in college, he remembered being overlooked for a starting role in the pitcher's line-up and not receiving support from some of his professors. Sadly, he recalled how disappointed he was not having any African American male professors. He changed his major from physical therapy to physical education. He attributed racism to his treatment while in college. Seeing that not many African American males graduated from the second college he attended, Jerry was determined to change the graduation statistics. After graduation, he filled a science position at his former school.

Jerry had to apply for an emergency certificate because he was not certified to teach science. Because he was given the opportunity to teach at his former school, Jerry was motivated to finish his educational certificate and give back to the community that once propelled him to academic success. With joy, he received mentoring from a colleague who once was his teacher. Jerry was ecstatic that he had the opportunity to work with teachers who once gave him a vast amount of intellectual, cultural, and social

capital. Because of the support he has received from his supervisor and colleagues, Jerry aspires to finish his certification and, in the future, become a school administrator.

Participant 5: Anthani

Anthani is a Black male novice. He is entering his second year as a high school history teacher. Anthani comes from humble beginnings. He grew up in poverty, his father died before Anthani finished high school, and he attended and graduated from failing K-12 schools. Anthani was bothered by the number of teachers, especially White males, who failed to break-up students' physical conflicts or show that they cared for students of color. He had ten African American male teachers who he remembers as being tough on discipline. Students refused to misbehave in those African American males' classrooms. Before Anthani finished high school, he got in to legal trouble and almost went to prison. Thankful to receive a second chance, he attended college after graduating from high school.

While in college, Anthani did not take school very seriously. He was a college athlete who struggled academically. He also tried to work a full-time job to support his newborn son. Many times he considered quitting school because he wanted to make fast money. He painstakingly expressed his regret for not taking college for granted. He was almost placed on probation several times and struggled to pass the Praxis. Anthani later csme to realize that he was getting older and that he needed to secure his degree to make a living for his child. While in college, he applied for substitute positions. Because of his great ability to discipline, he was allowed to work on his emergency certificate as a history teacher.

Because of his ability to successfully manage his class, Anthani was given the opportunity to fill one of the many vacancies in his school. Anthani's goal was to prove to himself and others that Black men could do more than just be a disciplinarian or football coach. Although he was not given a mentor, Anthani received guidance from one of his curriculum coaches, who gave him valuable feedback on his lesson plans and delivery of instruction. In the interview, he expressed his gratitude for the support he received from his principal and his colleagues. He attributes his success and increased level of confidence to their support. He aspires to continue teaching history and coaching football.

Participant 6: Hese

Hese is an African American male novice entering his second year of teaching ELA at the elementary level. Hese's K-12 experience was a successful one. He consistently remained on the honor roll, received academic support from his teachers, served as student body leader while in middle and high school, and graduated with honors. He observed that there were a few teachers who were not competent in their content area and were not as supportive. He described the four African American male teachers he had as knowledgeable, caring, and involved in the education of students.

Hese attended an HBCU, where he continued to accel in his coursework. He remained on the Presidential Scholar's list for his excellence. At times he became distracted by participating in social events such as fraternities, sororities, and choral performances. He enjoyed his professors, especially his five African American male instructors. At three separate times he wanted to drop out of his educational program due

to the stress of passing the Praxis. Hese drew his strength and motivation to succeed from envisioning himself one day teaching in a classroom.

After successfully interviewing at a school district's job fair, Hese was given the opportunity to make his dream come true. As a teacher, his confidence came from his ability to network with colleagues at his current school and other schools across the district, study his content, and register for local and state professional development opportunities. Hese is thankful for the support he received from his mentor, who helped him improve his classroom management and delivery of instruction. Hese sees leadership on his horizon, and he has an aspiration to become an administrator or central office employee.

Participant 7: Tall

Tall is an African American male novice entering his second year as an elementary special education teacher. Tall was excited to tell his story. He believes and hopes that his experience will draw attention to the malpractice that sometimes occurs in education and promote change to improve how African American male teachers are recruited and supported. Tall experienced homelessness as a child. He witnessed family violence at an early age, and his brother was murdered while in elementary school. He constantly stayed in fights with his peers. He continued to struggle academically until one of his female teachers made a connection with him and demonstrated care and concern to help him improve. Her support prompted his improved behavior and grades. He matriculated through middle and high school, making straight A's and eventually graduating valedictorian of his senior class. Tall is thankful that there were men in his life

who supported him along the way. He had three African American male teachers who mentored him and provided emotional support along his K-12 journey; their care inspired Tall to become a teacher so that he, too, could return the same support to students who may have the same K-12 experience.

College was an avenue for Tall to escape poverty. He received a scholarship to attend a PWI but transferred to an HBCU a year later. He appreciated the diversity he experienced while at the PWI but wanted to be around more of his peer group. While at the HBCU, Tall was impressed that other African Americans were regularly attending classes and were studious and competitive. Being around his peers increased his self-efficacy and motivated him to aspire to greatness on campus. While he thrived academically, he battled with mental depression and family issues. He overcame money shortages by getting a job, purchased a car, and passed his Praxis on his first attempt.

Tall's success in college allowed him to have eight job offers in special education. During our interview, he continually spoke about his confidence level as a teacher. Tall's upbringing and the struggles he had to overcome showed him that he could succeed under any condition or environment. His confidence was tested in his first year. Although his supervisor was very supportive, his colleagues and mentor were the total opposite. He disappointedly remembers working in a hostile environment. His colleagues acted unprofessionally around students, forged false data on reports, and negatively communicated with him. Although he will start the next school year at a new location, he is determined to maintain his integrity and serve the needs of his students. Tall attributes the professional development he has had to his ability to effectively manage his class and help students achieve. Tall aspires to become a school administrator. At that level, he

believes that he can better impact the culture and climate of the school and inspire students to excellence.

Themes

In this study, themes emerged from participants semi-structured interview data. Following their interviews, the researcher re-read participant's transcripts, identified codes from actual statements from my participants, made annotations, and looked for epiphanies. Next, I conducted a comparative analysis using participant's transcribed, annotated data with identified codes (nodes) from the qualitative data software NVivo 12. I was able to discover consistent themes from my combined coding within NVivo 12 software and the repeated ideas and epiphanies from participants' transcripts.

The following themes emerged: (a) a personal educational K-12 journey, (b) positive African American/Black male support systems, (c) the desire to support students, (d) triumphs and challenges attaining licensure/certification and service as a novice educator, and (e) professional aspirations. These codes and themes are included Table 3 and were drawn from the lived experiences of the seven African American/Black male novice K-12 teachers from the study.

Table 3

Summary of Codes and Themes

Themes	Codes
Personal Educational K-12 Journey	Helpful teachers Failing schools Challenging coursework
Positive African American/Black Male Support System	Willingness to serve Father figure

	Mentor
Desire to Support Students	Advocate for students
	Empathy
	Role model
Triumphs and Challenges Attaining	Tough exams
Licensure/Certification and Service as a	Supervisor's support
Novice Educator	Meaningful training
Professional Aspirations	School administration
	Improve learning conditions

Personal Educational K-12 Journey

African American male novice teachers are a valuable asset to any educational organization (Gholam, 2018). The first theme to emerge from the study is a personal educational K-12 journey. Several participants described their educational journey, looking retrospectively at their elementary, middle, and high school years. Participants also shared moments that inspired and discouraged them. Some teachers recalled having a positive K-12 experience. Jerry was one of the participants who recalled having very supportive and caring teachers:

> Me, personally, I did enjoy my experience. Though I was around my culture most of the time, through my experience, I think it was great. I did have different type of teachers. I had that teacher who really cared about you. You could tell they really cared about you and just not was trying to come there and give you what they was supposed to do and leave. I also had those teachers that was just there to do their job. My K through 12 experience was great. I made good friends, my education was great, like I said. I really enjoyed my high school years. Though people talk about my school, I really enjoyed the teachers. I had because I made good connections with them and I still talk to them to this day.

Bydee was another participant who enjoyed his urban K-12 experience. He discussed powerful teachers who knew their content and empowered him to one day become a teacher:

> I knew I wanted to be a teacher; I knew I wanted to be an educator because of the experiences that I did have in school. I would say that some of the people who made the greatest impact on that decision would be Ms. Barbara, who was my

> eighth grade English instructor. I've always had a love for reading, I always had high test scores and things of that nature, I remember that. Anything with reading, reading language arts, that was always my passion. And Ms. Barbara was my eighth-grade language arts teacher. She was like our mom away from home. She didn't play with us, she was very strict, very stern.

Hese was very excited as he shared his thoughts on former teachers who made a connection with him and challenged him to be excellent:

> I didn't really start meeting teachers that really impacted me until I made it to high school. That's when I really found some amazing male teachers. I had some teachers that I absolutely adored when I was in elementary school, and a little bit in middle school. The main ones that impacted me, I even still converse with them and meet up with them to this day, were teachers that I met when I was in high school. Now what was really positive and encouraging was when I finally met educators who were just wanting to really push me and start liberating what's in me, and saw the greatness in other students. When I felt successful was when it's like I'm doing very well on assignments, having a wonderful experience as far as being able to learn.

Critical Race Theorists argues that federal and state legislation should challenge color-blind and race neutrality laws (Solorzano, 1997). Immediately after the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas* (1954), the percentage of African American males graduating from high school began to decline (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Many believed their teachers had low expectations for them, and they felt unwanted (Goings & Bianco, 2016). While some students enjoyed their K-12 experiences, many experienced the opposite. Several participants described moments of fear, anger, and frustration as they discussed their personal K-12 journeys. Many participants came from low socioeconomic communities where getting a quality education was a challenge.

Tall was very emotional as he shared the pain and emotional scars he encountered while he was in elementary school:

> Well, I came to this city when I was younger, so I was living in a shelter. I came from Atlanta, Georgia. We really didn't have much going on, but I started kindergarten at K-8 School. It wasn't perfect... I had a good experience in school, but I had a lot of outside factors, dealing with violence. I saw a lot of killing coming up, so I think that had a major impact on me coming up in kindergarten and middle school. I used to get in trouble all the time. I used to get into fights. Me and my sisters and brothers, we were known for being the family who caused trouble.

Tall vicariously learned from his interactions within his social context (Bandura, 2007; Nabavi, 2012). He did not want to make the same mistakes as his peers. Although he grew-up in a tough environment, Tall was determined to succeed and get an education. He would eventually change his aggressive behaviors that kept him in conflict with other students. Tall soon began to experience academic success. He was determined to put all his energy on doing well in school. While he was dealing with the murder of his brother, Tall was able to concentrate and be the first in his family to graduate from high school:

> I made a goal, by the time when I got to high school, I made that my number one goal. It was a hard challenge, because it's a lot more Black young African-American scholars, so I knew it was going to be competitive. I knew it was going to be a challenge. But I did end up graduating valedictorian of my high school, and I was offered over $800,000 in scholarships. So, I think it was quite an experience, but the end result was amazing. I'm just happy and I'm excited for that, in itself. Being the first out of my family to graduate high school, and having all that money in scholarship, I think that was just wonderful. I still can't believe it today. Yes, and my senior year, my brother actually was murdered, and I still was able to come out as valedictorian. I was sick when that happened to my brother. Today is his birthday, actually. But I was sick when that happened to my brother. He died in the middle of my senior year of high school, so I had been doing great in high school, but when that happened, it kind of discouraged me. But I knew I had to do what I had to do for him, and I ended up coming out on top, so that made me proud as well as my mom, because like I said, I'm the first one out of my immediate family to graduate high school. None of my brothers graduated, none of my sisters graduated. I'm the only one. First college generation student.

Dehuff also shared painful memories of his K-12 experience. He discussed how he was bullied as a student:

> I'm African American and Creole descent. So, with that being said... And I grew up in a neighborhood that's kind of tough. So, with that being said, I was the lightest African American at my school, so I always got picked on. I got picked-on and then I was always bigger. Plus I have a twin brother who has autism. So, in elementary school, I had a few friends, but I was always picked on.

Dehuff smiled as he discussed more of his detest for some of his teachers. He shared that when he came out as a gay male, he was disappointed that his teachers did not support him when he was harassed by his classmates:

> Oh. I came out in high school, so I was picked on. But I went to a performing arts school, so it was a little bit easier. And when I transferred, I had to transfer to the traditional high school, because we didn't have the transportation to get me back and forth to the magnet school, so I got into the band there, and I ended up making a lot of friends. The one thing that I did hate about education is, my teachers sucked. They never took up for me. Only a few did. But a few didn't take up for me. And the ones that did, they really made me want to be a teacher, because the things they did with me that changed my whole life around, that made me want to be a teacher, that made me happy with myself, that made me confident in myself, that made me the person I am today.

Wilde and Hsu (2019) stated that individual's self-efficacy is raised with confidence that they can master a task when they observe others successfully model the behavior. Anthani was vocal about to the lack of qualified teachers and support he received as a student. Anthani discussed how appreciative he was to have another opportunity to teach, mentor, and inspire students. It bothered him that some educators refused to show the same level of care to all of their students. As an educator, he pledged to be the supportive teacher he never had. Anthani was mostly disappointed that he did not have any African American male teachers while he was in school:

> Well, to begin, I began elementary school at Bill Elementary. That's in a neighborhood called Miffet Gardens. The whole school was Black children and it was an urban elementary school; if that provides any details. Just thinking back, it was full of us, but the teacher population, as far as male, was non-existent. There wasn't one Black male teacher there. It was a Black custodian, but all the other males were White males. Sometimes you would have people coming to school

> and the White teachers didn't necessarily understand how a fight break out in the middle of the hallway.

Anthani believed that the disconnect between students of color and White staff members negatively impacted how the students felt about their school leaders:

> As far as middle school, the male principal was a White male. So the relations wasn't loving, it was, either you do this and nothing won't happen to you. You won't get in trouble if you don't do this. If you do this, we going to bring down the hammer, but not necessarily trying to understand the circumstance surrounding that particular behavior.

Positive African American/ Black Male Support System

According to Mabee (1979), in 1805, New York's Manumission Society was educating Blacks to teach Black children, and "it was an advantage for black children to be taught by blacks; it will help to 'kindle a spirit of emulation' in the black children" (p. 93). Decades before the Civil War, African Americans saw value in teaching their own children (Anderson, 1988). Throughout the interview process, participants unanimously discussed how fortunate and thankful they were to have caring teachers who supported and inspired them along their educational journey. Several of the participants recalled growing up without a father-figure to guide them through their tough years as young men. With pain in their voices, they shared how challenging life was for them. Thankfully, there were men in their lives who were able to fill the gap of their absent father. Witnessing others successfully complete a task can improve one's level of self-efficacy (Miskel & Hoy, 2013; Wilde & Hsu, 2019). Participants discussed the empowerment and confidence they received from caring teachers. For many of the interviewees, African American male K-12 and collegiate educators became their heroes.

Several participants described their former teachers as the following: father-figure, role model, mentor, protector, etc.

Anthani was a student who got into legal trouble before he graduated. He described his intention of dropping out of school and giving up on life. Anthani recalled several of his former African American male teachers challenging him to make the right choices and not to run from responsibilities. He remembered one of his teachers chastising him for not working hard enough and using his skin color as an excuse to give up on his dreams. He states:

> I think they were very encouraging though. They all made a plan, that they thought of lot of me and my potential. It was all about them motivating me to stay the course and use my potential in a way to where I can impact somebody else. So they were, like I say, they were some solid brothers. They really wanted me to see how the world is and how we are perceived in the world because it's almost like no matter what... I'm sure you know this. No matter where you are, you have to prove that you could compete intellectually, with anybody. And it's true. You got to be twice as good. You got to be better than him and you got to impress him for you to get to have a shot at the stuff that other people walk right in the door and it's implied or understood, that they belong there. We always have to show and tell; we got to show and prove. And that's just the nature of being a Black man. And not enough Black boys know this. So I want to do my part to make sure that, Bro, you got to be twice as good in everything, because that's the only way we'll turn this thing around.

In high school, Bydee often saw teachers referring students of color to the office. He remembers many African American Male students being suspended for truancy and fighting. Bydee discussed the acts of kindness and empathy he often witnessed from his former Assistant Principal:

> They let me know that a difference can be made even if it's in the life of a few. If we can reach the few, the few that we can reach... One thing I noticed about my assistant principal is that he kind of went after the young men who were challenged, who were challenging. Had different backgrounds and things of that nature. So, he was very interested in those types of young men. Most of those young men didn't have fathers in their life, and I came from a home that my father was not great myself.

Jerry discussed how impactful it was to have eight African American male K-12 teachers:

> I'd say about eight. Every one of them I had though was great though. I feel like a successful teacher is a teacher who can connect with you on a more personal level. And every one of them I had, I connect with and I don't think it was just because of the race. I just think because they understood the language. I think we were more connected on a personal level and it allowed me to learn because they knew how and how I would get it. It was a great experience. Like I say, I only had eight. And now that I think about it, it is crazy. I go that many years and only have eight male teachers, but it was great though. I enjoyed it. They were very interactive. The classrooms were all very interactive. Though they might have had a good relationship with me, they still had that level of respect for me and it was a great experience.

Many of the participants were not given mentors to support them when they were hired. Several interviewees contemplated leaving the profession due to frustrations involving non-supportive supervisors, colleagues, and/or parents. Jerry was one of the few participants who had a mentor that also was his former teacher:

> So my teacher was my mentor. Don't know how that happened, but I'm glad it did. To have somebody that saw you grow up and you saw... I saw him grow too, as well. I'm looking like, you know, but you probably was young too when you started; now that I think about it. But having him, just in my corner; being more of a big brother than a mentor, hey, you need to do this. You need to do that. Having him as a big brother, just... A lot of times, when we talk, it was just to talk. How'd your day go? Well, what was bothering you? And more teachers that do that... Our hallway, we do that a lot and we tend to care about each other; that it goes a long way. But my mentor was great. I think it's a good program they have, to give you a mentor because you definitely need it. Because if not, it'll be like you people just up and leave after two years because they don't really feel like they got the support and they really feel like they getting anywhere, because you can get overwhelmed. It can be a job that can overwhelm you to the point you just like, I can't do this. But I think it come in with your character too, and just knowing that kids are going to be kids, but if you instill the right things and you do the right things, it'll work out.

Tall's home life was filled with trauma and tragedy. He grew up without his father, and he lost his brother to murder, which devastated his family. During his dark

moments in life, school was where he escaped the turbulence that surrounded his life. In school, he was successful and celebrated. Tall discussed how some of his African American male teachers became his refuge from the storm:

> The thing that inspired me the most were the male figures in my life. Those happen to be my male teachers. They inspired me and let me know that education is the only way out. A lot of people go to sports and other things, but what I realized is you can never go wrong with education. If you have an education, you are likely to get a great career, and have a wonderful profession, as well as have a comfortable life. I saw my teachers doing that, because they was all... My dad is incarcerated, so those were my only role models in my everyday life. When I went to school, those were the ones that I looked up to, so I was like, I just want to be just like them, and that's what I did. I turned to education. I didn't turn to sports or anything, like my friends. I turned to education.

Tall shared how thankful he was for his education. He was inspired by the social and economic support that his former teachers displayed:

> I only had three African-American male teachers. It was great, because like I said, I didn't have a father in my life, so they would help me. They were very supportive. They mentored me, and they did everything to help me succeed. Even going into college, they were more than supportive. I didn't have much coming up, so say for example if I had a event to go to where I had to have a suit or something, my mom couldn't afford a suit. Most of my male teachers, they helped me get the things that I needed in order to be successful. They helped me pay for different supplies, suits. They was just very supportive throughout my K-12 experience in education. It was wonderful, having those male figures in my life, those positive male figures in my life.

Desire to Support Students

According to CRT, race and racism is endemic, and color-blindness and race neutrality of laws serves the interest of the dominant group in the United States (Solorzano, 1997). Desegregating schools in the 1950s had unintended consequences and a negative impact on the African American community (Oakley et al., 2009). Many African American male teachers would lose their teaching jobs (Oakley et al., 2009;

Pabon, 2014). African American men were stripped from a profession that allowed them to positively contribute to their society (Pabon, 2014). During their interviews, participants passionately shared their desire to give back to their community. All of the participants wanted to help change the negative narrative told by mainstream media, which portrays African American males as at-risk and a menace to society. The men who were interviewed agreed that by using their platform as educators, they could empower young men of color to avoid the same mistakes they made while in K-12. Anthani mentioned that money should not be the main reason why one becomes an educator. He states that instead, time should be wisely spent teaching students wisdom that will last with them for life. Anthani says:

> You got paid money, but it wasn't no way to make any kind of difference. Not as a whole community; not for our community. So yeah, it's good for a little Black boy to see a Black man going to work, but what he doing in between time when they see each other is the thing. So if I can be in the place where the little Black boys are and they parents drop them off and they go to work, in those eight hours that they not around each other, I'm going to have just implemented something, some kind of wisdom in this kid to bridge the gap until where they can get back with their parents, the people who love them because essentially, that's what it got to be. You got to love these kids to even think about being an educator because it's not like you doing it for the millions of dollars you're going to get.

Anthani also believes that teachers should not abuse their authority as leaders, but instead show compassion and empathy to students who are having a difficult time at school. As far as classroom management is concerned, Anthani convincingly explained that teachers should give students the same respect that they wanted in return. He states:

> Everything is just at a respectful level. I'm going to respect you how I need to be respected. I wouldn't want to represent you in any way other than respectful. And that's something that I make sure that they understand, we're going to be respectful to one another and we not going to make each other look bad. That's just it. They take well to it. Like I say, I'm hard, but fair. Because like I say, I understand what that life was like. Some days they going to come in and they cousin might've just have been shot or something. So they full of emotions and

> they not having a good day. Although you got classroom norms, this child over here and having been through that and got her head on her desk, I can relate. I could not be as strenuous in that situation as I might be if that wasn't going on. So you just got to understand what they going through. They'll love you for it. If they love you for it, they'll respect you and you won't have any problems. They got to know you love them though.

Branall believes that many students lack self-confidence and that their classroom performance would increase if they gained more self-confidence. Branall discussed the importance of modeling confidence before students so they can implement the same behavior:

> When I'm in front of my students, they need to see confidence. They need to have faith that I know what I'm talking about and parents need to know that. I mean, I mean, I have confidence, and if there's something I don't know, I research it. I notice that my students behave better, and their performance improves when I show them how confident and knowledgeable of what I am teaching them. I notice that they pay attention.

Bydee taught in a school district that was on the failing list from 2019 to 2020. He observed the lack of support, minimal resources, and struggles his students had to endure during that time. Although he has had opportunities to teach in other nearby school districts, he has chosen to continue to serve the students where he is currently employed. Although he champions the educational need of every child, Bydee specifically states that his desire is to help at-risk African American male students:

> I decided to go to college because I knew I wanted to be an educator, go into administration, make a difference in the lives of children right here in the district that I was raised in. This is why I didn't go outside of the district to pursue employment although I had a few offers. Wanted to give back to the district that helped to raise me. So, I knew I had to do secondary, and I also realized that I loved smaller children. I loved smaller children, but I wanted to make a difference in the lives of those who had gotten a little older, who were getting ready to either go from the cross phases of middle school to high school, or from high school out into college or into the world. So, one of my things was making sure that they had compassionate concerned effective African American male educators in place to catch those young men who didn't have father figures in their life. And as they're

> on the cusp of making decisions whether to go down the right or the wrong path. Maybe be able to in place to turn and veer and steer off some of those decisions that would curtail them down the wrong road.

According to Erwin and Graham (2011), "Black men see teaching as an opportunity to correct social, political and even economic barriers that prohibit African Americans from success. As such, African American men teachers tend to teach in ways that attempts to end racial inequality" (p. 399). CRT proponents argue that race and racism should be incorporated into schools' curriculum and pedagogy to educate citizens about the impact of race and racism (Solorzano, 1997). As he concluded his interview, Bydee asserted the need for teachers to teach students more than just subject matter. He fervently stated that teachers needed to consider the diverse living conditions that interfere with student learning. Bydee believes by the time students finish K-12, they should be independent thinkers who positively contribute to society:

> My motto is you have to connect before you correct. Especially being in a Title I area in the district and in the community that we're in. We have a lot of children who are being raised by the community, and I literally do mean that. We've had some children this past year who were homeless. We had one child I know specifically; his mother had already put him out of the house at age 13. You're living literally being raised by community. You're living between the homes of friends and I was surprised how these young boys, especially the young boy. Y'all are living at other folk's house like, Oh, I was over at Jason's house last night. I don't believe I'm there just to teach the pages off the book. I'm there to teach life, life applications. As momma would say, how to get somewhere and sit down and act like you got some sense, applications. And this has been proven in the lives of the young boys and girls who have come through my classroom. End of my first year as a first-year teacher I had eighth grade, I'm eighth grade, so just like what I wanted to do. And in my first year I had the honors homeroom, eighth grade. 51% of my students met or exceeded their Scantron target goals, which was the highest in the reading or math in the building that year.

Dehuff is a Black band teacher who identifies as gay. He was bullied and harassed for his weight and uniqueness while in elementary and middle school. Dehuff

remembered one of his teachers defending him from attackers. The actions taken by that teacher empowered Dehuff to become a teacher himself. His goal was to educate and defend students who were likewise being mistreated. Dehuff states:

> In elementary school, I had a teacher named. He was African American, and he was openly homosexual. So, when the kids did pick on me, he kind of protected me. In middle school I joined choir and band. My band director in middle school took a lot of time with me, and made me come out of my shell, and made me feel okay. Because I've always been a little weird. So, he made me feel wanted and loved. Plus, at that time my dad wasn't around as much, so it was nice to have a father figure. I know there's a lot of other kids that's like me, and I feel like if they had a teacher like me, they would be okay. Like, I actually have one student who... he's trying to figure himself out, and he tried to commit suicide, because he didn't think that he was okay. He thought something was wrong. And I told him, I went through the same stuff you went through, and I'm just going to tell you, it's going to be okay.

Tall grew up in impoverished conditions. He was also forced to deal with the death of a family member at an early age. He refused to allow his anger to get the best of him and instead channeled it to change his life for the better. Tall discussed the influence teachers have over the lives of children. He states:

> As an educator, you wear many hats, as I'm pretty sure you know. You have to mentor the students. You have to be a parent for the student, because a lot of those students coming from Title I schools, which is all the schools in my district, are Title I schools, coming from those type of areas, in poverty, not having much. Parents send their children to school the best way that they can. A lot of those students just don't have much, so as the role as an educator is very important, because as I said, you wear many hats. They might come to school like I did, to escape all of the factors that's going on around them in the community. So, you must give them the very best that you have.

As a special education teacher, Tall expressed his displeasure with the high suspension rate of African American male students and referrals to the Special Needs program. The devastating effect of not recruiting African American male teachers negatively impacts African American male students (Scott, 2016). In the field of special education, where many African American children are inappropriately identified, African American male

children receiving services often have limited engagement with an African American male teachers (Scott, 2016). Tall believes that teachers should take the necessary time to build a relationship and listen to the concerns of their students. Tall discussed how successful his classroom management is because he allows his students to express themselves in his classroom. He states:

> Classroom management. I think that plays a major role in teacher effectiveness as well as student achievement. Classroom management, the term is if you're able to reach the kids or if you're able to make an impact on those children, and I'm happy that I have strong classroom management skills. Coming in, I didn't expect to have as many discipline issues as I experience in my classroom. However, as time progressed, I was able to better address those issues. So, when I come in, I demand respect, so my students know, when they walk in... For one, I establish strong and healthy relationships with the students. That's number one. So, when the students come into my classroom, I greet them with a handshake, to let them know whatever's going on outside of class, try not to bring it in. Come in inspired. I greet them and I show them respect, the same respect that I want. In addition to that, I also allow them to have a voice in my classroom. I try not to be so authoritative and make all of the decisions as a teacher. I let them have their own input on different things, such as in the beginning of the school year, we establish our own classroom rules. Of course, as a teacher, I set some expectations for the students, and I allow them to set some expectations for themselves. When they break those rules, we talk, like, hey, we both collaborated on these classroom rules, now here you go breaking it. I think that allows them to have ownership in their actions. So, I establish healthy relationships with the students, I allow them to have a voice in the classroom, and we set consequences for those actions, and stick to them, not go back on something or if Johnny is not breaking these rules all the time, the first time he break them, it's okay. No, we stick to what we established.

Attaining Certification/Licensure and Teaching as a Novice

Although the percentage of African American men attending four-year colleges and universities has increased from 1980 to the mid-2000's, this group continues to have stagnant college enrollment numbers and low college completion rates (Harper & Wood, 2016). Throughout the participants' interviews, many of them voiced their frustrations

with the process they had to go through to attain certifications. Some of the participants were fortunate to have supportive professors who effectively prepared them to pass their exams, while others struggled due to the lack of guidance. Not only did the participants have varied effects attaining their certification and licensure, but many also had varied experiences as novice teachers. Participants discussed their thoughts about the amount of support they received from their supervisors, colleagues, and professional developments.

Many of the participants described how their college experiences were financially, socially, and emotionally frustrating. The Praxis and edTPA were assessments that gave most of the participants issues because of its high stakes and challenging assessment protocols.

As a music teacher, Dehuff was required to take the two exams. He recalled having to take the Praxis four times before succeeding. He states:

> Oh. First of all, finances. Because being a music ed major was expensive. Like, I was having to buy my own reeds, and reeds are not cheap. My reeds, the kind that I play on, they're, like, $45 a box, and only five come in it. So, that was expensive. Then I had to get a computer, then we had to do all this... we had to pay for the background check, then we had to pay for all these tests. And I took the Praxis four times. I remember one time, I worked. Got off work at six o'clock in the morning. I had to take the Praxis at seven. And I made sure I stayed up, and I took the Praxis, and I passed it that time. But that was hard. And the Praxis was $120 a test. I was so mad, because I was working overtime just to pay for the test. I was asking people to borrow money, and I would have to pay them back, because I was like, I feel bad that I asked you to borrow money. And then the Praxis, and not only the Praxis. EdTPA was a killer. The test was all... but I'm more of a performance based test taker anyway. So edTPA wasn't hard to me, but it was the actual written part, which, that helped me create better lesson plans, and look at the other things that I need to focus on.

Jerry was one of the participants who has not yet passed the Praxis. Although Jerry spoke about his objections to the assessment, he saw its relevance and importance in helping to improve student learning. He states:

> It's hard. I'm still working on that today. It's hard though. I do think it's well-needed though, because like I said, a lot of teachers that taught me probably didn't have to do this and it shows. A lot of teachers, I feel like, didn't really know that content area that I had, but they got the job just because of their degree. And I do believe you can go to college and not learn anything, just as long as you apply yourself and show up at class. In college, you can do that and people don't realize that some colleges are like that.

Tall also experienced difficulties in some of his college course work. He expressed disappointment with himself for not always performing. He was also disturbed by the number of his peers who changed their major because they could pass their exams for licensure. He states:

> The certification as far as the practice exam, a lot of students... I'm just telling you the backend of how it inspired me or whatnot. But a lot of the students in my department had to change their majors because they couldn't pass that practice exam, so it was kind of discouraging seeing all of these people, especially the people who took courses with me, change their major to child development simply because they couldn't pass that test. It was very discouraging, so it scared me, actually. I was scared to take the test. I held out so long to take the test simply because I saw everyone changing their major, so I'm like, This test is awful. So, what I did do is dedicate time to studying for that test. Regardless to what I had to do each day, I made sure I studied for that test. I actually passed all parts my first try, so it was wonderful for me. I thank God, because it was a challenge, learning all of that material, especially not knowing exactly what's going to be on the test.

Several times throughout the interview, Anthani expressed regret for not taking college seriously and studying for class. He failed the Praxis twice and expressed his frustrations about the poor academic decisions he made in the past. Anthani painfully lamented that some of his current struggles with pedagogy and content were caused by his failure to stay focused on his studies:

> Well, that's an issue that I am still going through, quite honestly. I played around in college and now I had to struggle taking the Praxis. It makes you give a real hard look at what you've done up until this point, as a student. And that's the most impactful thing that it has done for me because you go on thinking about what you should've done or, If I would have taken things more seriously, my route to this point of my life would've been smoother. So yeah, it give you a reality check

> over what you've done; especially me being 37 years old, starting a new career. I had jobs but I never had a career. Man, I will be glad when I pass that test.

Just as life as a college student has its challenges, the first years in the teaching profession also have their challenges. Participants described their support and disgust of the leadership styles of their colleagues and administrators. Ryan (2006) states, "Inclusive teaching practice is best developed when teachers and their supervisors have opportunities to talk about it. Particularly effective are dialogues that encourage teachers to become aware of, and critically reflect on their learning and professional practices" (p. 16).

Hill-Carter (2013) states that African American male teachers are equipped with the necessary beliefs, attitudes, and personalities needed to support all students, particularly minority students. Before his first year of teaching, Anthani served as a football coach, tutor, and in-school disciplinarian. He was offered his teaching position because he impressed his principal with his ability to manage students during in-school suspension (ISS). His ability to manage and tutor students opened the door for him to become a teacher. With the support of his curriculum leader, Anthani was able to improve his performance as a history teacher. He states:

> So as you travel through, especially through Birmingham city, the system here, people put you in a box. So I think I was put in a box where I was a good positive male to have around, a decent football coach, but I couldn't help much on intellectual matters. So I had to remove myself from different environments in order to get to the point where I am now. I end up having a opportunity to long-term sub. In doing that, I was taught how to teach. I was evaluated, I was given suggestions, I was taught my curriculum coach. She seen... with the background and ISS, I could have control of the classroom. Classroom management wasn't an issue at that point. So now, I had to learn, now that you got them quiet, you got to teach them. She was able to help me with that tremendously. I remember writing the first lesson plan; she was there with me step-for-step. She came in the classroom and did evaluations. So I think that through performance, I was able to impress her. My Principal believed in me enough to offer me the job full-time,

> with the credentials that I had at the moment. So I appreciated that opportunity because it was an opportunity for me to show that I'm more than just a football coach. I'm more than just a disciplinarian. I can actually teach.

Many novice teachers enter the profession with low confidence and an ineffective circle of support to assist their development (Basile et al., 2009). Branall's first year as a teacher had a rough start. He admitted that his classroom management was poor and that his assigned mentor was not supportive. He states:

> When I first started teaching, my mentor, was good. You know, they kind of showed me the ropes, but then things took a turn for the worse between me and my mentor because my mentor felt that I should do things exactly the way that they do, and my personality did not lie to me. So, I had to use the things that my mentor told me, but at the same time I had to, find methods that cater to my own method of teaching. He became rude and at times stopped speaking to me.

Branall complained about the training his school district required him to attend. As a music teacher, he felt that he was forced to attend professional developments that did not support what he was teaching his students. He states:

> I'm just going to be honest. A lot of professional development, I don't get much out of it unless it's geared towards music or something I can really use. A lot of professional development days they make us go to, it doesn't really relate to arts in any way. So basically what I mean, there's some professional development sessions, some are good, most of them are not.

Bydee had an unpleasant experience at a job fair where he was trying to interview for a teaching position. He recalled being disappointed at the customer service of a school administrator who interviewed him. He states:

> I interviewed once at this school and the principal at that time was very disrespectful. And I knew, and I had heard things concerning her, and I'm a fair person, I give everybody a fair chance. But at the end of my interview with her school, I knew I did not want to work for her even if she did call me. I sat across from her, and she didn't even speak to me as the principal, and I will never forget that. Never as long as I live. She sat across from me drinking a Sprite and a bag of Golden Flake's potato chips, plain. I'll never forget it as long as I live.

Dehuff was elated as he entered his first year in the teaching profession. He

praised his supervisor for her acts of kindness and for the support she demonstrated.

Dehuff states:

> My principal is amazing, for one. She always supports me, anything I need. I don't have the biggest car, so she actually... the system bought me a new instrument for my classroom. She let... truck, go get an instrument and bring it back to the school. So, for that, I'm like, yeah. And my principal, she supports me so much. And not even on an educational level. She acts like a mom. Because she know I don't have a... my momma's not here. And sometimes, she'll talk to me, and she'll be like, now, you're doing a little bit too much. Because I'm a chronic overachiever. I like to go above and beyond. So she's like, sometimes I need to calm it down a little bit. But she's really supportive.

Hese also provided praise for his mentor. He believed that her observations and feedback positively impacted his growth as a new teacher. He states:

> My mentor currently is a very talented lady. She has been absolutely fantastic. She has been incredibly helpful. How she manages, she observed me and come to my classroom even when our classes are in session at the same time, it's just beyond me, but she makes it work, and she doesn't miss a beat. She was just phenomenal. She always gave me honest feedback. The feedback was never something that tore me down, but it was always just motivating me to do better. She was like, did you include this? I would say, Oh, man, I did, I forgot to include that. She's like, you've got to have that, and everything.

During his first year, Jerry recalled his principal asking him to take a leadership role in staff development meetings. Although he felt inadequate at the time, he stated that her trust in him empowered him to improve his public speaking and delivery of presentations in class and at staff meetings. He states:

> I like my Principal because she don't let you be scared. She don't let you be nervous. My first week there, we had a professional development and she put me on the program to do a PowerPoint about something I didn't even really know about. I think it was Marzano. We were doing Marzano. I'm like, what is Marzano. She put me on the team to help present it. And they was like, well, this what Marzano is. This how we get evaluated. We want you to talk about this slide. So I'm sitting at home, I'm studying all week like, let me study this PowerPoint, that slide. Professional development is good. I don't think all of it is needed. Some of it is just kind of redundant. But the most of it I had was great. Like I said, our professional development is very interactive. We don't just sit back and geek. Our principal makes it where we're all doing a part of it. and that

> kind of helps me too, because I see the best way to learn something is to do it, or to kind of write down and be doing something on it.

Tall recalled the lack of support he received from his mentor during his first year as a special education teacher. He explained that his mentor was verbally abusive and unprofessional. Verbal persuasion and vicarious learning are two of the four primary sources of experiences that describes self-efficacy (Miskel & Hoy, 2013). Tall had to endure the verbal abuse from his colleagues and unethical practices on the job. Tall questioned the work ethic of his colleagues after he witnessed them on several occasions falsifying student data and not serving students. Thankfully, he was encouraged by the professional development he received because it gave him the opportunity to improve his practice. He states:

> So, my learning, I've had the opportunity to attend many professional development opportunities presented at local, state, and national levels. Being able to collaborate with these professionals, not coming from a professional background, it definitely encouraged me because growing up, I never would have thought I would have been a teacher, yet collaborating with teachers, providing remarkable ideas. Because that's what we do, we exchange ideas in professional development. Me being able to present ideas that professionals find astonishing, I think that in itself is very encouraging for me, because during professional development, I'm always the one asking questions, reading and providing feedback for the presenters or the facilitators of the session. I think that doing that, it has inspired me.

Professional Aspirations

In an effort to correct historical, cultural, and social negative stereotypes about African Americans, many African American male teachers have chosen to continue their educational and professional growth (Brown & Butty, 1999). When inquired about their longevity in the field of education, all participants unanimously declared that they wanted to remain in the field. Participants also agreed that by remaining in the teaching field, they would have a greater opportunity to positively empower students to graduate from

high school. Throughout the interviews, two participants stated they would remain in the classroom and five aspired to become school administrators. What they all had in common was a quest to improve teaching and learning for all students.

Anthani shared his desire to remain in the classroom. He prefers to remain a high school history teacher, and he wants to add football coach to his resume. He believes that as a football coach, he can exert his influence and motivate students academically. He states:

> I'll still be teaching high school. I'll be teaching in high school and coaching in high school. I noticed that student athletes look up to their coaches, and I want to be there for when they struggle so I can talk to them before they just give-up. So, yeah, I will be teaching history or whatever social science that's offering in high school, and coaching football.

Similar to Anthani, Dehuff also agreed to remain in the classroom. He believes that African American male students needed African American male teachers who cares for them. He states:

> So, five years from now, I do see myself being a college professor, and I still want to teach in my school district on the elementary level. Or I want to do more with social emotional learning. And I think that's a theme that we do not talk about enough. Especially in the Black community. We don't talk about social issues. We don't talk about our emotions. The first thing we hear is, you need to go to church. Sometimes, our kids just need somebody that's going to talk to them, love them, and support them. I think if I'm not teaching, I'm definitely going to be, probably, doing more social emotional stuff.

The remaining five participants have dreams of supporting students at the administrative level. They believe that they will have a greater impact as a school leader. Branall is a high school music teacher. He stated that his decision to go into administration is due to the failed leadership of his current administrator. He states:

> I have seen bad principals. My friend dropped out of school because his principal lied that he hit a teacher. The teacher did not like my friend. Also the principal was rumored to have slept with some of the teachers. Man, all that angered me.

> So, I just went back to school. I just finished another Master's in Instructional Leadership. I feel like I could do better. I don't know. Maybe I'll be somebody's assistant principal. No, you never know. I don't know if that's my desire to be in the administrative role, but you know, My mom just told me to go back to school and get this degree. So it's a reason.

Bydee's goal is also to become an administrator. He discussed that the leadership responsibilities that he has taken upon himself were examples of his ability to support both students and teachers. He states:

> But professional growth, in five years hopefully operating as an administrator to assist the principal and help to carry out that vision that he or she may have for the school, to continue to impact lives. That's one of the reasons why I did pursue my admin degree very early in my career. I find myself often on my breaks and stuff, when most teachers would spend it locked up in their room. I find that going to check on my colleagues, checking to make sure students are in the right place at the right time doing the right thing. Things of that nature, going to check on troubled students and other grades who I'm already building my connections with.

Hese's eyes enlarged and his voice became more festive as he spoke about his future in the field of education. He declared his intentions to first perfect his skills as a classroom teacher and later down the road attempt administration. He asserts:

> I definitely see leadership on the horizon. I'm definitely looking and open to one day running my own school and prayerful that that will be an exception. I mean an expectation that it will be for me. First, I see myself growing more in the knowledge of my content area. Definitely increasing in my confidence and what I do in my interaction with students. I'm just really open and looking forward to developing more as an educator, as a teacher, as a disciplinarian.

Jerry teaches at the same middle where he once was a student. He revisited the times he and his peers tried their best to avoid being sent to the office for behavior issues. Jerry discussed how his former principal, an African American male, led with an iron fist. He contrasted this to the leadership style of his current principal, an African American female. He concluded that his desire to one day become an administrator is because of the leadership style of his former middle school principal. He states:

> A lot of people say they see... I don't yet. I think I would definitely be in the education field, still. Like I say, I love it. I really do. I would like to be a principal one day, maybe. Not just to have a position, but... I like the classroom. I do. I really do like the classroom. I like being hands-on with the students, but I feel like I don't have a lot, I don't see a lot of male principals. And not speaking bad on my current principal or anything, but when I had a male principal, I saw a lot different character, or a lot different atmosphere at my school. I don't know if it was looking different from a teacher's standpoint at that time, but when you got somebody that looks like you, that you know, okay. He runs the whole school... that's what the student is thinking. It create a different environment and it create a different mindset. It did for me at least, to know, okay. I'm looking at this tall Black man. He runs the school. To me, I look like, man, he got it made. And students don't even know what they go through. One, they don't even see Black males in the school, so now, they see not only a Black male in the school, but he's the principal over the school. It create a different mindset in their mind.

In the field of education, African Americans had to endure racial stereotypes placed on them by the dominant culture, which also affected them politically, scientifically, and religiously (Tate, 1997). Jerry wanted to take advantage of his leadership role to counter the narrative of African Americans being lazy, unteachable, and unruly. Jerry went further to discuss his desire to be an administrator. Comparing school leadership to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, he passionately argued that being a school leader was vital because its platform has the potential to enable or suppress a child's growth towards excellence. He notes:

> And it's sad that we say, Black lives matter, but we, as a people, don't show each other the care change the we need to show. A lot of people don't understand the platform that they have to do that. We as educators, have a big platform. You basically can control a life. You can be the hero for someone. Maybe this person might be somebody successful or you can maybe just deteriorate and they be right down the street from you, walking around doing God knows what, they whole life. You can't make them do it, but you can do everything in your power to help them not do that. I feel like everybody don't use the power that they have. Or they misuse the power that they have. So I definitely see myself trying to be something bigger than just a science teacher one day. I love what I do and I love being an educator. It's great; not just because... Like I said, the hardest part of my job is just the paperwork. And that's fine, but when you can go to work every day and you can make somebody else day great, it's a good thing, it's great.

According to Tall, leadership makes the difference whether students succeed or fail. He states:

> In the next five years, I really want to be able to be an administrator for a school system, possibly an assistant principal, principal. I want to keep going up. That's my goal. I want to be able to run a school or be on the administrative cabinet, to make sure that I am making a huge impact on students, because honestly, the school follows behind the principal. If a school has a great principal, the school will be successful. If a school don't have a wonderful administrator, the school will fall. That's just honesty. I'm hoping that I'll be able to build and strengthen my skills as an educator so that I can be an effective administrator when the time comes.

African American teachers disapprove of the negative, racial, and hostile working environments that have impeded their professional growth and ability to serve all students (Kohli, 2016). Because he unsuccessfully was able to change the culture at his school, Tall stated that serval times he contemplated leaving the profession. Tall said he was frustrated at the leadership of his former principal. He was disappointed that teachers were not held accountable for their actions. Out of disgust, he described how parent and student complaints were often ignored. According to Tall, the climate was unhealthy, and many teachers transferred out to other schools.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided detailed stories of the lived educational journey of seven African American/Black male K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama. Based on participants' interviews, five major themes emerged, including: (1) a personal educational K-12 journey, (2), positive African American/Black male support systems, (3), the desire to support students, (4) triumphs and challenges

attaining licensure/certification and service as a novice educator, and (5) professional aspirations.

Through their narratives, participants were able to articulate their views regarding power, race, and gender roles in the field of education. Study participants self-identified as African American/Black males who served as band, English Language Arts (ELA), science, history, and special education teachers. All participants are novices employed in an urban school district. Despite the many frustrations that participants had to endure, they remained intentional in their quest to transform teachers' performance and students' learning.

Several participants described their educational journey looking retrospectively at their elementary, middle, and high school years. Throughout the interview process, participants unanimously discussed how fortunate and thankful they were to have caring teachers who supported and inspired them along their educational journey. Several of the participants recalled growing up without a father-figure to guide them through their tough years as a young man. Throughout the conducted interviews, participants passionately shared their desire to give back to their community. All of the participants wanted to help change the negative narrative told by mainstream media, which portrays African American males as at-risk and a menace to society.

Many of the participants described how their college experiences were financially, socially, and emotionally frustrating. The Praxis and edTPA were assessments that gave most of the participants issues because of its high stakes and challenging assessment protocols. When asked about their longevity in the field of education, all participants unanimously declared that they wanted to remain. Participants

also agreed that by remaining in the teaching field, they will have a more significant opportunity to positively empower students to graduate from high school.

Chapter 4 utilized detailed, thick descriptions with direct quotes to capture participants' lived experiences as novice K-12 educators in an urban school district in Alabama. In Chapter 5, a summary and discussion of the participants' findings will be presented as well as implications and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In the poem “Let America be America Again,” Hughes expresses his view of the essence of equity and equality for African Americans. Hughes states, “Let America be America again. Let it be the dream it used to be. Let it be the pioneer on the plain. Seeking a home where he himself is free. America never was America to me” (Rampersad & Roessel, 1994, p. 189). In the work, Hughes describes the belief African Americans had in the idea of freedom. In time, African Americans would discover that the writings in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution did not yet apply to them. Hughes writes, “O, let America be America again—The land that never has been yet—And yet must be—the land where every man is free. The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME—Who made America, Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain, Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain, Must bring back our mighty dream again” (Rampersad & Roessel, 1994, p. 190). Hughes continues to challenge the power structure of the United States by bringing attention to other ethnic groups who also contributed to this nation’s growth. He states, “O, yes, I say it plain, America never was America to me, And yet I swear this oath—America will be!” (Rampersad & Roessel, 1994, p. 191). Hughes sounds optimistic about the quest of African Americans one day enjoying the same privileges and rights as White Americans.

During the 1930s, the United States was battling political malpractice, an economic depression, and social wars (Anderson,1988). In the poem “Let America Be

America Again," Hughes described the hopes many African American citizens had of being treated equally and capturing pieces of the American Dream. Unfortunately, many of them, along with other minority ethnic groups, were forced to realize and survive decades of historic, systemic racism (Anderson, 1988; Spring, 2016).

The participants in this study are descendants of African Americans/Black citizens who once lived through the nightmare of slavery, Jim Crow, and political-economic oppression in the United States. Using their talent as educators, these African American/Black male novice teachers wanted to transform the stigma of African American men in society and improve the quality of education for the next generation of students. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived educational journey of African American/Black male K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama. By using a qualitative, critical narrative inquiry approach, participants were able to tell their stories in the field of education and describe their realities through the phases of being recruited, retained, and supported as highly-qualified teachers whose goals are to enhance student learning.

Critical narrative researchers gather stories to describe the lives of specific individuals and then deconstruct those stories in order to explore "assumptions about knowledge, power, and reflexivity" (Hickson, 2016, p. 380). Critical Narrative Inquiry allowed the researcher to deconstruct the participants' stories while examining the historical, cultural, and social influences that affected their lived experiences (Hickson, 2016).

For this study, participants were recruited through purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009). My participants were African American/Black male novice K-12 teachers. The

seven participants' ages ranged from 24-37, and no interviewee had spent more than five years in the classroom. Because of the nature of this study, participants were selected from an urban school district in Central Alabama. Permission was granted, and recruitment letters were sent to school district leaders and principals. Emails and phone calls were later conducted with participants.

Study participants included two elementary, three middle, and two high school teachers. The teachers were all employed at an urban school in central Alabama. Five themes emerged from the study (see Table 3). Although participants had to overcome many hurdles, African American/Black men in this study demonstrated professionalism and class as they discussed their respected lived experiences in K-12, college, and employed as an urban teacher. The stories told by the participants served to close the current gap in the literature regarding African American/Black novice K-12 teachers in urban school districts. The stories of supporting the professional growth of teachers, improving learning conditions, and respecting the needs of all students were evident throughout this investigation. This final chapter includes the following: (a) a summary of major findings, (b) answers to research questions, (c) implications of the study, (d) recommendations for future research, and (e) a conclusion.

Summary of Major Findings

Five major themes emerged from participant reflections of their lived experiences as African American/Black men while in K-12, college, and as novice urban teachers. The findings suggest that personal educational K-12 journey, a positive African American/Black male support system, a desire to support students, triumphs and

challenges attaining licensure/certification and service as a novice educator, and professional aspirations were the expressions of the study participants lived experiences as urban novice teachers.

Starting with early childhood education, more male teachers are needed (Browder & Bryan, 2013). Early childhood African American male teachers have the ability to empower African American students and guide them so that they do not make poor choices that may lead to poor academic performance, being labeled with learning deficiency, being suspended, or dropping out of school (Anderson et al., 2011; Browder & Bryan, 2013; Brown, 2012). Participants discussed their personal educational K-12 journey. Anthani shared his regrets of not having more African American male teachers to motivate and correct him from the many mistakes he made. He blamed his teachers and one of his white administrators for their failure to connect with him and show compassion when he struggled academically and behaviorally.

Branall remembered attending failing schools with a lack of resources or qualified teachers to prepare him academically. He states that he experienced failures and frustrations in college because he was not adequately prepared. He attributes his ability to overcome his collegiate struggles to the success he is currently enjoying in the classroom.

Bydee described his K-12 experience as successful. Although most of his teachers were female, he states that they taught from a genuine disposition of care and love for their content. Bydee praised his teachers for preparing him to graduate in the top 10% of his graduating class. He declared that the strong academic foundation he was given made the difference in his success.

Most of my participants grew up in the mid-to-late 80s and 90s. During those decades, many African American men were incarcerated for poor economic and social choices (Toldson & Morton, 2011). Also during those decades, more prisons were built, housing a vast portion of the African American male population (Toldson & Morton, 2011). Tall explained how painful it was growing up with a father in prison and a brother murdered. Using school as his outlet, he reached out to the African American male teachers around him for support. Tall describes how his teachers invested in him and encouraged him to stay on the right path. According to Goessling and Rice (2005), many male students who enter college will bypass the field of education because of the lack of male teachers they had as role models. Dehuff was also thankful for the positive support from his Black male teachers. Like Tall, his father was not in his life. Identifying as gay at an early age, Dehuff recalled being bullied and not supported by his teachers. According to Dehuff, his middle school music teacher came to his rescue and encouraged him to be strong and courageous. Dehuff's self-efficacy was strengthened by the acts of teacher. Dehuff attributes the leadership of his music teacher as the reason why he also chose to teach music and to become an advocate for students who are harassed because of their class, sexual identity, or ethnicity.

According to Stulberg and Weinberg (2011), "higher education often has the profound ability to increase social and economic capital and serve as a tool of social mobility" (p.108). Policies enacted during the Jim Crow era and racist actions taken by local and state leaders were implemented to impede the progress of African Americans who tried to climb the educational ladder (Naser, 1978). As school districts look to improve upon instruction, they should consider the need to hire more African American

male educators and school leaders who will support the academic abilities of all students (Warren, 2013). Participants emphatically expressed their desire to support students' academic, social, and emotional well-being. Hese believed that educators should be confident and knowledgeable in their content. Based upon the SCT, it is assumed that individuals with high efficacy are more likely to view challenges as something that can be mastered and individuals with low efficacy are more likely to provide less effort and avoid challenging tasks (Nabavi, 2012). Hese believed the quality of teacher's instruction would improve as they received more professional development, support, and praise for their efforts. He added that teachers who are not content or pedagogically sound cause students to misbehave and have learning difficulties. Jerry also demonstrated excitement as he expressed his desire to support student's performance. He said that by establishing healthy relationships, teachers could build trust and cooperation with their students. He also believes that when students are given a voice in classroom decision-making, they are more able to take responsibility and participate in their education.

High stakes testing and more stringent licensure benchmarks have contributed to the turnover rate for many new African American male educators: 30% of this population leaves teaching within five years (Brown & Butty, 1999; Going & Bianco, 2016). Study participants described their experiences attaining certification and teaching as novices. Most of the participants expressed how frustrated they were with their failures taking the Praxis and contemplated changing majors. As novice teachers, they all agreed that more support was needed from their supervisors and colleagues. Branall failed his Praxis several times. He stated that it was not a true measure of an excellent teacher. Although he eventually passed the test, he still believes that the Praxis is the reason why African

American teachers are not in the profession. Dehuff stated that the Praxis was very expensive, and he had to get a job to pay for it. His first year as a teacher was successful. Dehuff praised his colleagues and supervisors for giving him the necessary professional development and classroom support he needed. Hese also was thankful for a successful first year as a teacher. His mentor was a veteran teacher who gave impactful feedback on his teaching practices. He also stated that he loved attending district and state professional development opportunities because they provided him the resources and information to strengthen his content knowledge.

Finally, professional aspirations were identified as a major theme from the participants' discussions. Bydee was one of the five participants who visualized himself as a future administrator. He wants to use his influence as a leader to impact more students than just those in his classroom. Jerry also has hopes of becoming an administrator. He believes that his leadership style and ability to build positive relationships will help to decrease the number of African American male students dropping out of high school. Dehuff sees himself still in the classroom, but he wants to put more focus on helping students with social-emotional challenges. Dehuff is bothered by the number of students with mental illness and committing suicide. He also sees himself serving at the district level to assist students with mental challenges.

Research Questions Answered

The purpose of this Critical Narrative Inquiry was to explore how African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigated their own educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama. This study was

guided by the following research question: How do African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigate their educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama? Sub-questions included:

SQ1. How do African American/Black novice teachers describe their personal educational journeys (K-12 and Higher Education)?

SQ2. What specific challenges and triumphs do African American/Black novice teachers experience in becoming K-12 educators?

SQ3. What are African American/Black novice teachers' current experiences working in an urban Alabama K-12 school district?

Research Sub-Question 1

The first research question asked study participants to describe their personal educational journeys (K-12 and Higher Education). Participants began describing their K-12 experience. Some participants were thankful for the teachers who went above and beyond to prepare them for success, while others were displeased with the lackluster effort their teachers showed, displaying minimal care for study participants emotionally, physically, or educationally. Several participants said they were influenced by teachers who offered verbal praise and ensured that the learning environment was challenging yet fun. Study participants were displeased by teachers who were rude and mean. They stated that these teachers' negative energy prevented them from taking chances and being innovative.

Throughout their K-12 journey, participants had a range from zero to eight African American/Black male teachers. Those who had fewer than two expressed regret that there were few African American/Black male teachers to instruct them.

Six of the seven participants in the study immediately started college after graduating from high school. Anthani was the only participant who waited. He said he waited because he was not ready mentally and he wanted to make money to support his son. For the participants, going to college was not an option. They believed that by continuing their education, more opportunities would be available for a productive future.

For most of the participants, their college experience was rewarding yet challenging. Five of the seven participants attended an HBCU. They stated that they enjoyed the Greek life of the various fraternity organizations that were on campus. The family atmosphere they experienced with their professors and classmates made college life fun. The two who attended PWIs stated they felt pressure to perform academically to be accepted by their peers. For these students, college life was not as welcoming, as they recalled having a few conflicts with their professors and classmates. Similar to when they were in high school, the range of African American/Black male professors ranged from zero to six. Students who attended an HBCU were influenced by professors who were firm and demanded excellence from their students. Participants at PWIs stated that they wished their professors were more approachable and supportive when they needed assistance with school projects. Tall was one of the participants who transferred from a PWI to an HBCU because he said he felt unsupported by his professors and "out of place." Each participant stated that their self-efficacy was negatively impacted by the actions of their professors. Many shared that they wanted quit school or change majors because of the lack of support.

Research Sub-Question 2

The second research question asked participants to identify and describe the triumphs and challenges in becoming a K-12 educator. Before choosing education as a major, three of the seven participants were prepared to venture into other fields of study such as neurology, health science, and history. At first, Anthani selected history with no intentions to become a teacher. He and the other two participants would later evolve and join the teaching field after having an epiphany to support and give back to at-risk students. The remaining four participants agreed that one of their teachers inspired them to want to become an educator.

Participants contemplated giving up school because of the challenging course work and the lack of support from their professors. Those who performed well in college attributed it their self-determination to not give-up, healthy relationships with their professors, and the desire to make their family proud. All participants stated that they had confidence in their abilities to overcome all odds to graduate.

All participants discussed the many challenges they while in college. There were challenges with finances, coursework, finding love, and passing the Praxis. Some participants had to apply for jobs to pay for personal and school responsibilities. Many became frustrated with the limited cooperation for assistance from peers and professors over difficult assignments. The challenge of not having friends or a date became a concern for some of the participants in the study. The biggest challenge was getting their certification and licensure. Although there were frustrations over challenging class assignments, it was the rigor of the Praxis that had the biggest negative effect on the study participants. They shared feelings of joy after they passed the exam, and

participants described how their confidence levels were renewed and they were excited to take on the challenges of teaching.

Research Sub-Question 3

The third research question asked study participants to describe their current experiences working in an urban Alabama K-12 School District. Many participants participated in job fairs held by their school district. They recalled being very excited to be interviewed by some of their former teachers and principals. Everyone had a pleasant interview experience except for Bydee, who reflected on the rude and dismissive attitude by one of the school district's principals during the interview process. Five of the seven participants stated that they were excited to serve students. Participants said they were confident in their abilities as teachers because of the support they received from their colleagues and supervisors. They mentioned that the positive support and words of encouragement inspired them to excel and take on other leadership roles such as the Building Leadership Team (BLT), Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), and other key school committees. Two of the five participants stated that they loved working with students but almost left the teaching profession because of the attacks and unprofessionalism that came from their colleagues.

Although each participant discussed the value of having a mentor as a novice teacher, only four of the seven had one. The four participants who had a mentor described them as being a listener and a cheerleader. They also stated that having a mentor gave them the boldness to implement new and engaging lessons. The three participants who did not have a mentor remembered having issues with classroom management and

effective teaching strategies. They recalled feeling frustrated, helpless, and confused at times. Participants who did not have a mentor stated they had more difficulties with classroom management. After a few months of developing a positive relationship with their students, these three study participants witnessed improved learning conditions and higher student engagement.

Despite feeling that some of their school districts' professional development opportunities were relevant, study participants agreed that they strengthened the knowledge of their subject matter. Participants all agreed that professional development was necessary. Study participants also emphasized the need for school districts to direct teachers to trainings that are content-specific. All participants concluded that they see themselves remaining in the field of education for years to come. Five participants aspire to go into administration, while two desire to remain in the classroom.

Overarching Research Question

The research question for this study was: how do African American/Black male K-12 novice educators navigate their educational journey to become K-12 educators in an urban school district in Central Alabama? Participants responded with the following five responses: (1) they were driven by an internal desire to be the first in their family to attend college, (2) they established strong relationships with their faculty in college, (3) they were persistent, (4) they sought out mentors, and (5) they wanted to be the role models and cheerleaders for their students they did not have.

Each participant was willing to describe their educational journey. First, several participants were driven by an internal desire to be the first in their family to attend

college. As they discussed their successes and failures from K-12 to college, participants praised former teachers who prepared them for college, mentored them, and established positive relationships with their classmates. Participants who were adequately prepared in high school had fewer academic challenges than those who did not have a highly-qualified teacher. Participants discussed how determined they were to become trailblazers for their families. Some participants came from low-income environments with family issues that negatively impacted their educational performance, while others came from supportive environments that propelled them to easily succeed. Despite the fact that many grow up without fathers in their lives and witnessing violence in their community, participants stated they were determined not to let anything prevent them from graduating from college.

Second, they established strong relationships with their faculty in college. Participants discussed the importance of building healthy, positive relationships with their professors. Several participants praised the guidance they received from African American male professors who motivated and challenged them to excel in their subject matter.

Third, participants were persistent. Several were ready to change degrees or drop out of school because of personal conflicts or academic difficulties. Many participants complained that their confidence was negatively affected because of the rigor of the Praxis exam. Many were forced to retake the exam several times before attaining their certification. Even though many of them struggled to pass the Praxis, they did not give up.

Fourth, participants sought out mentors. Participants discussed the challenges they experienced as novices. They were all willing to be role models and father-figures to their students. Some participants described their mentors as lifesavers; whereas, others described their mentors as a deterrent to their professional growth. They described the impact that their supervisors, colleagues, and self-efficacy had on their ability to manage their class, turn around professional developments, and take on other leadership responsibilities. The participants also discussed their desire to remain in the teaching field and possibly advance to other school leadership roles.

Lastly, participants wanted to be the role models and cheerleaders to their students that they did not have. They denounced teachers who lacked the ethics of care or presented themselves as only disciplinarians. Participants expressed gratitude for being in the teaching field. They challenged themselves to be better than the uninspiring teachers they remembered as children. They stated they were honored to take on the responsibility of inspiring and educating students.

Implications of the Study

After the *Brown* ruling, the mistreatment of African American teachers negatively impacted African American students and their community (Milner & Howard, 2004). African American educators, who were considered the champions and pillars of their community, began to witness school closings, job losses, and rejections from employment at White schools (Anderson, 1988; Spring, 2016). Currently in the United States, less than 2% of African American male teachers make up the teaching profession. According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), “race continues to be a significant factor

in determining inequity in the United States" (p. 48). "The 'voice' component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice" (p. 58).

My own educational experiences include working as a substitute, classroom teacher, and currently as an administrator. I am familiar with the challenges that both teachers and administrators face daily as it relates to teaching, learning, and creating a safe and healthy work environment. I can still remember my first five years in the classroom. As a teacher, I interacted with supportive supervisors, angry parents, and curious students. For this study, I wanted to hear stories of other African American male teachers and learn about their journeys as a novice, urban, K-12 teachers. I believe that by hearing and understanding participants' stories, school districts and policy makers will have more data to build upon antiquated methods to recruit, retain, and support more African American male teachers as classroom leaders. Study findings yielded five major themes that provide implications for further practice: (1) a personal educational K-12 journey, (2) positive African American/Black male support system, (3) the desire to support students, (4) triumphs and challenges attaining licensure/certification and service as a novice, and (5) professional aspirations.

Personal Educational K-12 Journey

Since the seventeenth century, African Americans were determined to transition from their former status as slaves to citizens (Spring, 2016). Gaining access to a K-12 education would have its challenges for African Americans; however, acquiring an education would strengthen their quest for freedom (Anderson, 1998). Before *Brown v.*

Board of Education Topeka, Kansas (1954), African American male teachers proudly served their communities in multiple roles, but desegregation led to many losing their employment in schools (Meidi, 2018).

Decades later, African American male students attended schools where they did not see male teachers of color, and most did not choose careers in education (Meidi, 2018). By studying the characteristics of public school teachers, it was noted that 89% of women compared to 11% of men were employed at the elementary school level, whereas at the secondary school level the gap shortened to 64% women and 36% men (NCES, 2018).

Many participants came from low-income homes with few resources and had to attend failing schools that also lacked enough resources to support their learning. As former K-12 students, participants recalled the lack of understanding and support they received from some of their White teachers. They stated that many of their teachers did not attempt to establish a teacher-student relationship. Participants said they were inspired by teachers who offered verbal praise and were offended by those who were mean and distant. Some participants recalled moments when they did not feel safe and were bullied in school. The lack of care and protection caused participants to feel depressed and unsure of themselves.

Participants also shared positive experiences shared by participants. Several participants were thankful for the knowledgeable and caring teachers they had as children. One participant stated that he became a teacher to protect students who were being bullied because he remembers one of his teachers doing that for him. All participants said they enjoyed school but that having a teacher who could relate to their

personal, social, and intellectual needs was important. School leaders may want to ensure that equitable resources in nutrition, academics, mental health are provided to support K-12 students who come from low-income homes. Routine classroom walkthroughs, by an administrator, should be conducted to ensure that conditions for learning and incentives to celebrate student learning are practiced daily. School leaders may also want to conduct random classroom observations to monitor quality instruction and to ensure all students are treated respectfully. In order to serve their diverse student population, diversity training should be presented to teachers.

Positive African American/Black Male Support System

Studies have discovered that African American male educators have not been heavily recruited because of socio-historical and societal expectations (Jackson et al., 2013). The media's negative portrayal of African American men has distorted their image as moral, law-abiding citizens (Jackson, Boutte, & Wilson, 2013; Meidi, 2018). Recent attention has been given to the murder of an African American high school student, Trayvon Martin, who was mysteriously murdered for wearing a hoody over of his head while he was walking home from his neighborhood convenience store (Dance, 2015).

Study participants were bothered by the high number of students referred for disciplinary infractions and/or placed in special education courses. Participants also wished they had more African American/Black male teachers to emulate. Several participants grew up without a father figure in their home, and they believe that an adult African American male presence would have encouraged them to perform better. The terms 'Black males' and 'thugs' are erroneously perceived as being synonymous"

(p.120). The critical role African American men play in the lives of students of color is key to helping these students overcome the negative experiences they are faced with in urban K-12 schools (Golden, 2013).

From K-12 to college, participants stated that the few African American male teachers that taught them inspired them to want to give back to their community and also teach. Some participants shared that their African American male teachers took the place of their absentee fathers and served as role models. One participant was excited to have his former teacher as his current mentor. Brockenbrough (2014) asserts that there is a need for "more critical considerations of how Black male teachers negotiate the pressures to serve as role models, father figures, and disciplinarians for Black students" (p. 502). In order to serve future students of color, school districts need to examine student demographics within their districts and carefully diversify teacher-student ratios at the local level. Many male students of color spend years before they are taught by a teacher who is same race or gender. School districts should partner with nearby universities and colleges to recruit future African American men to the teaching field. School leaders also may want to invite community leaders and mentoring organizations to support, educate, and expose at-risks youth to positive male leaders improving society. African American male teachers may want to consider building healthy relationships with as many African American male students they can to inspire and empower their students to believe and always strive for excellence.

Desire to Support Students

Although African American male teachers are asked to fulfill such roles as mentors, father figures, disciplinarians, and coaches, they are most needed as gifted, special education, and pedagogically-sound educators (Bryan & Browder, 2013; Rice, 2005). With attrition rates among new teachers being alarmingly high, it has become a priority over the past decades for school leaders to recruit men of color in the nation's urban school districts (Brown & Butty, 1999). Unfortunately, there is a gap in the literature to explain why so few African American males have chosen to enter the teaching profession (Madkins, 2011). According to Madkins (2011), "the literature suggests that since there is a demographic disparity, there is a need to increase the numbers of minority teachers in our public schools" (p. 423). Several participants expressed the need to give back to their community by helping at-risk students. Participants saw the need for more highly-qualified African American male teachers to academically challenge students. Participants believed they could provide culturally relevant and responsive instruction to their students. Study participants also believed they had the tolerance to empathize with students' academic and behavioral struggles. School districts should conduct career fairs where educators are allowed to promote the profession and empower future candidates to become teachers. School districts should also partner with government leaders to offer scholarships and encourage high school African American male students to declare education as their college major.

Triumphs and Challenges Attaining Licensure/Certification and Service as a Novice

The federal government had to intervene on several college campuses so that African Americans could attend (Slater, 1996). Stulberg and Weinberg (2011) state that "higher education often has the profound ability to increase social and economic capital and serve as a tool of social mobility" (p.108). Policies during the Jim Crow era and racist actions taken by local and state leaders were implemented to impede the progress of African Americans as they tried to climb the educational ladder (Naser, 1978). One example is when former Alabama Governor George C. Wallace tried to prevent African Americans from attending the University of Alabama. In June of 1963, Wallace challenged President Kennedy's federal mandate for two African American students, James Hood and Vivian Malone, to enter the University of Alabama in order to keep his campaign pledge that he would not integrate the school (JBHE, 1996).

Acts by state and local leaders to keep higher institutions of learning segregated has negatively impacted the performance of African Americans for decades (Naser, 1978). In analyzing the percentage distribution of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools by race/ethnicity and highest degree earned and looking at the school year 2015-16 report's, the NCES (2019) reported the following: 40% of Whites 40% compared to 37%African Americans 37% reported a bachelor's degree as their highest degree, 48% of Whites compared to 45% of African American 45% reported a master's degree as their highest degree, 14% of African Americans compared to 8% of Whites reported an educational specialist degree as their highest degree, and a uniquely higher percentage of African Americans (2%) reported to have earned a doctorate degree than Whites (1%).

Study participants stated that they struggled academically, socially, and financially in college. Several participants stated they had to get a job to help pay for class and books. For some, coursework and a lack of social life was an issue. Many participants complained that their instructors were not approachable or supportive of their performance needs. Study participants also discussed their frustrations with the Praxis. They stated that the Praxis forced many of their peers to change majors or to not achieve certification. As novice teachers, participants stated the importance of having a mentor and supportive colleagues and supervisors. Participants also valued intentional professional development that supports their subject matter. In order to increase the percentage of African American male teachers, a commitment by our national and state leaders to assist K-12 school leaders in closing the achievement gap and providing incentives to colleges and universities to enroll African American males in Teacher Education Programs must be treated as a major priority. University and colleges may want to provide online resources and create monthly tutorials to support students as they prepare to take the Praxis. Since there is a shortage of teachers, state departments of education may want to consider supporting school districts as they try to hire candidates who have not passed the Praxis but have met all of their other prerequisites for their degree to teach. School districts should require novices to have a certified mentor with the same certification. School leaders should also consider partnering highly motivated mentors who will support, observe, and offer the required feedback a novice teacher needs to strengthen his or her pedagogical skills with such novice teachers. Administrators can best lead by example as they offer pedagogical advice and model lessons to assist novice teachers. School leaders may want to conduct professional

development that will allow teachers to assess their level of efficacy, in their content area, so they can learn their strengths and weaknesses. School leaders may want to demonstrate the importance of daily self-reflection by engaging in intentional dialogue about taught content and strategies. School districts may want to create a task force that will investigate the current educational practices of African American/ Black male teachers and explore best practices to retain and support them. Professional development should also be relevant to teacher's certificate and unique to their individual needs.

Professional Aspirations

According to Griffin and Tackie (2017), "Black teachers comprise just 7% of the teaching population in the nation's public schools. Altogether, teachers of color represent 18% of the teaching force. Black students make up about 16% of the K-12 student enrollment" (p. 37). African American teachers compared to White teachers had more teachers who were employed lesser than three years (9 % African American vs. 12% White) and Whites (24%) had more teachers employed with twenty or more years of experience than African Americans (19%) (NCES, 2019). Participants unanimously stated that they desire to remain in the teaching profession for at least the next five years. Study participants believe that remaining in the field of education will help African American male students overcome challenging behaviors and academic issues. Many of the participants saw themselves leading as school administrators. They believe that as administrators, they will have more authority to create safe learning environments for all students, especially African Americans. School districts should hire more African American male teachers to serve as school administrators. African American male

teachers aspiring to leadership positions should be given leadership opportunities to increase their capacity and confidence as leaders. They should have ongoing practice leading data meetings, monitoring the school's attendance, and leading professional development opportunities at the school level.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research was limited to seven African American male novice K-12 teachers at an urban school district in Central Alabama. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate the lived experiences of other African American male novice teachers in suburban and rural school districts in the state or other regions of the country. By collecting this data, scholars, researchers, school leaders could better understand the root causes that prevent African American males from being recruited, retained, and supported in various school districts. As we look into the factors that prevent African American males from entering the teaching field, an investigation should reach back into the K-12 arena. Researchers may want to inquire from K-12 students how they feel about their teachers, the school, and the instructional support they are receiving.

Future researchers must examine student data and career goals to assess their longevity plans for the future. Several participants aspired to become a school leader. Future researchers should examine the lived experiences of African American novice administrators. It would also be interesting to study the quality and quantity levels of support these administrators receive. Future researchers should explore the quality of training and leadership skills African American male teachers possess. This examination is needed to evaluate their preparations to become effective leaders.

Recommendation for Practice

The research study examined the lived experiences of African American male urban novice K-12 teachers in Central Alabama. Participants described their journeys from K-12, higher education, and their first years as a novice teacher. Participants experiences were detailed with thick, rich descriptions. Their conversations should not end with this study.

In order to enhance the self-efficacy teaching capacity of African American male novices, a cohort for African American male novice teachers should be granted access to meet quarterly at district meetings to present best practice strategies to improve their content and pedagogy. Diversity and tolerance trainings should be conducted twice a year to ensure that all stakeholders understand and value a diverse staff and student population. At the collegiate level, leaders should incorporate standards that address components of the Praxis throughout students' coursework. By doing this, the school of education will see an increase in the number of students passing the Praxis on their first attempt. Seminars to address sexism, microaggression, and racism in schools should also be enforced to create a healthy and judgement-free environment for teachers to instruct and for students to achieve. Participants stated they were concerned with the social-emotional state of some of their students. It is imperative that district and school leaders provide intentional and consistent training to support students and adults who suffer from mental illness and depression.

District and school leaders must partner with area universities and colleges to recruit African American male students in the field of education. Teacher education

programs should edify its mentoring programs to strengthen student-teaching and prepare teacher candidates to have a successful experience as novices. A continued relationship should be established as professors and school leaders allow career fairs and professional developments to exist. These ongoing trainings will increase teachers' efficacy and encourage them to continue their education. School leaders should also appoint African American male teachers to leadership roles that will eventually motivate them to pursue higher levels of educational leadership opportunities.

Conclusion

The purpose of the *Brown* decision was to end the racial segregation of public schools and to provide equal opportunities for students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Because of segregationist and the racist policies of many states, many minorities were forced to continue attending segregated schools where the class size was over-populated, buildings were dilapidated, and funding was scarce (Ladson-Billings &Tate, 1995). Racist policies of many state governments have also negatively restricted the number of African Americans in the teaching field, including African American men. Currently, less than 2% of teachers in the United States are African American males (Erwin & Graham, 2011). With such a low percentage, there needs to be more research, litigation, and support on the behalf of African American male teachers by policymakers, politicians, and educational scholars.

In order to increase the percentage of African American male teachers, a commitment by our national and state leaders to assist K-12 school leaders in closing the achievement gap and providing incentives to colleges and universities to enroll African

American males in Teacher Education Programs must be treated as a major priority (Holton et al., 2019). Despite the noted progress of African American males in higher education, there are still obstacles to be addressed that impact their educational attainment, such as the prison pipeline (Gass & Laughter, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of African American male novice K-12 teachers in an urban school district in central Alabama. Participants were willing to contribute to the literature by sharing their lived experiences in the field of education. As study participants reflected, they were humble and agreed that they wanted to help transform how African American male teachers are treated professionally. Reminiscing about their own K-12 experiences, participants wanted to improve the quality of instruction, mindset of teachers, and ethical decisionmaking that impacts student learning.

Throughout the study, participants were focused on their community and students. Participants all agreed that novice teachers needed support from mentors, their supervisors, and colleagues in order to develop pedagogically and impact student achievement. In order for novice teachers to effectively contribute to student learning, they must strengthen the academic optimism credentials that will help them to build trusting relationships with students and parents, establish collective efficacy with colleagues, and increase academic press with students (Hoy & Miskel, 2006). Refusing to perform to the stereotypical role as a disciplinarian, participants agreed that they were talented enough to teach an academic challenging, culturally relevant, and culturally responsive curriculum. The researcher discovered that participants truly enjoyed being

educators, and participants witnessed their growth through attended professional development.

I hope the findings of this study lead to future studies on African American male novice K-12 teachers in urban school districts. The research findings will contribute to the conversation of teacher education from the perspective of the lived experiences of African American male novice K-12 urban teachers.

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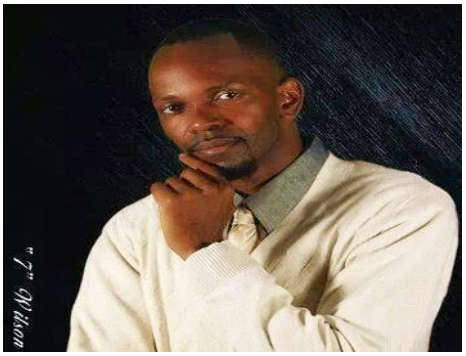
APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Recruitment Flyer

AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES NEEDED FOR RESEARCH STUDY ON THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF K-12 NOVICE TEACHERS



This study will allow the voices of African American male educators to be heard and provide insight into their lived experiences as K-12 novice teachers. **African-American male novices who have taught in an urban K-12 school setting and who have 1-5 years of teaching experience is needed for this study!** Participants will be asked to partake in an interview to understand how they have been recruited, retained, and supported as K-12 teachers.

If you are interested, please call 205-745-1074 or email herb7@uab.edu.

Thank you!

APPENDIX B

TELEPHONE SCRIPT

Telephone Script

Telephone Script: Participant Recruitment

Researcher: Hello. This is Herbert Leon Blackmon from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. I am calling you about potential participation in a study that I am conducting on the lived experiences of African American/Black male novice K-12 urban teachers in a school district in Central Alabama. Do you have a few moments to speak with me?

Option 1

Prospective Participant: No, this is not a good time.

Researcher: Is there another time that would work?

Prospective Participant: Yes, how about _____

Researcher: Thank you, I will reach out again on (date) at (time). [End call]

Option 2

Prospective Participant: I am not interested in participating

Researcher: I understand. Thank you for your time. [End call]

Option 3

Prospective Participant: Yes

Researcher: Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me! As I mentioned, I am conducting a study to explore the lived experiences of African American/Black male novice K-12 urban teachers in a school district in Central Alabama. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I would like to take a minute to share some information about the study with you.

To be an eligible participant, you must be:

- Between the ages of 18 and 65;
- identify as an African American/Black man;
- and have taught five or fewer years as a K-12 teacher.

The primary purpose of this study is to **t**he purpose of this study is to disclose the narratives of African American male novice educators in an urban K-12 school system located in central Alabama.
Participants of this study will be asked to:

1. Complete an initial questionnaire via email communication in order for me to gain informed consent and to gather some general demographic and contact information. This initial questionnaire should take no more than 5 minutes to complete.
2. Complete a tape-recorded interviews. The interview may take one hour and a half to complete.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. At any point within the research process if you would like to discontinue participation, you are welcome to do so. There are no expected risks to this study.

Your participation in this research study will be confidential. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only I (Herbert Leon Blackmon) will have access to the records.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please provide me with your email address and I will send you the link to the informed consent page and a brief questionnaire.

Do you have any questions for me?

(Researcher will answer any questions or concerns that the prospective participant might have.)

Researcher: Are you interested in participating in the study?

Option 1

Prospective Participant: Yes
Researcher: May I have your email address?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today! I am going to send you an email with a recap of the information that I have shared with you today and a link to the consent and questionnaire.

- Researcher will send prospective participant the Initial Email with the Qualtrics link.

In addition, is there anyone that you think might be interested in participating in the study that you could refer to me?

- ***If yes***, give the option to take the contact information over the phone OR let participants know that they can also provide it via the questionnaire.
- ***If no***, thank them.

Researcher: Thank you for your time today. I hope the rest of your day goes well!

Good-bye.

Option 2

Prospective Participant: No

Researcher: No problem. I understand. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today! Is there anyone that you think might be interested in participating in the study that you could refer to me?

- ***If yes***, give the option to take the contact information over the phone OR provide your email address and phone number for them to contact you later.
- ***If no***, thank them.

Researcher: Thank you for your time today. I hope the rest of your day goes well!

Good-bye.

APPENDIX C

EMAIL/SCREENING QUESTIONAIRE

Email/Screening Questionaire

Initial Email: Participant Recruitment

To: _____ (Prospective Participant Email)

Subject Line: Seeking Participation for a Study on The Lived Experiences of African American/ Black Male Novice K-12 Teachers in an Urban School District in Central Alabama (Participant #)

Content:

Greetings _____ (Prospective Participant),

I am conducting a study to explore the lived experiences of African American male novice K-12 teachers in an urban school district in Central Alabama. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

To be an eligible participant, you must be:

- Between the ages of 18 and 65;
- identify as an African American/Black male;
- have taught as a teacher for five or less years.

The primary purpose of this study to disclose the narratives of African American male novice educators in an urban K-12 school system located in central Alabama.

Participants of this study will be asked to:

1. Complete the initial questionnaire linked to this email communication in order for me to gain informed consent and to gather some general demographic and contact information. This initial questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.
2. Complete an interview that may take approximately 1.5 hour to complete.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. At any point within the research process if you would like to discontinue participation, you are welcome to do so. If you are a UAB student or employee, taking part in this research is not a part of your UAB class work or duties. You can refuse to enroll, or withdraw after enrolling at any time before

the study is over, with no effect on your class standing, grades, or job at UAB. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you take part in this research. There are no expected risks to this study.

Your participation in this research study will be confidential. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher (Herbert Leon Blackmon, Jr.) will have access to the records.

In addition, if there is anyone that you think might be interested in participating in the study, please feel free to refer them to me (my contact information is below) **OR** you can email their contact information in response to this communication.

If you would like to participate in the study, please follow the link below to the informed consent page and a brief questionnaire.

---------- Insert Qualtrics Link Here ----------

The UAB Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this study. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the UAB Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (205) 934-3789 or toll free at 1-855-860-3789. Regular hours for the OIRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday.

Herbert Leon Blackmon
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Researcher
Cell Phone: (205) 745-1074
Email: herb7@uab.edu

Screening Questionnaire

Title: What are the Lived Experiences of African American/Black Male Novice K-12 Urban Teachers in Central Alabama?

1. Are you willing to consent to partake in this study?_____
2. What is your name?_____
3. What is your gender ?_____
4. Do you identify as Black or African American?_____
5. What is your age?_____
6. Are you currently employed?_____
7. What is your position? How long have you been in education?_____
8. What subject do you teach?_____
9. Did you have a mentor when you began teaching? Explain.
10. How many years do you plan to remain in the educational field? Explain.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW

Consent to Participate in an Interview

Title: A Critical Narrative Inquiry of the Lived Experiences of African American/Black Male K-12 Novice Urban Teachers in Central Alabama.

Date: 2020.

Dear Urban K-12 Teacher,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting entitled, "What are the Lived Experiences of African-American/Black Male Novice Urban K-12 Teachers in Central Alabama." The purpose of this research study is to explore the educational journey of an African-American/Black male novice teacher in an urban K-8 school in central Alabama.

You have been selected for this study based on your role as an African-American male novice educator who has served less than five years in the Birmingham City School District. You are invited to participate in an interview, scheduled at your convenience, which will last no longer than one hour and a half. This interview will be face-to-face and audio recorded. A copy of the interview questions will be provided to you in advance for your review. I will include the interview questions for your review in this email.
Your participation in this study is voluntary and there is no compensation for your time given to this study. You may withdraw at any point during this process. Taking part in this research is not a part of your work or duties. You can refuse to enroll or withdraw after enrolling at any time before the study is over, with no effect on your job.

Your participation in the research study will be confidential. In published reports, there will be no information included that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher (Herbert Leon Blackmon) will have access to the records.

Please contact me either by email (herb7@uab.edu.) or call me (205-745-1074) me to schedule an interview if you are interested or if you have any further questions.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the UAB Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (205) 934-3789 or toll free at 1-855-860-3789. Regular hours for the OIRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also call this number in the event the research staff cannot be reached, or you wish to talk to someone else.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: _____ Interviewee: _____

Date: _____ School: _____

Time: _____ Position: _____

Location: _____ Years of Experience: _____

Introduction:

Thank you, for taking the time to answer my questions today. The purpose of this qualitative research study is to allow participants the opportunity to vocalize their journey as African American novice teachers. My research question is "What are the lived experiences of African American male K-12 novice educators in an urban school district in central Alabama?"

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of African-American male novice K-12 teachers in Central Alabama. A novice teacher in this study is defined as an educator who has five or less years of teaching experience. I will be conducting an audio-taped interview. What we say today will be recorded and transcribed. I am very interested in your perspective, so please feel free to discuss your views, impressions and feelings. You should know that your name will remain confidential in the study and the data from the interview will be available for you to review. I may ask some additional questions that you have not reviewed, in order to clarify what you mean. Should you be interested in the completed study, a copy will be made available upon request.

Are you ready to begin?

[Test the tape recorder.]

[Conduct the interview]

Questions:

Are you ready to begin?

I. Personal Educational Journeys (K-12 and Higher Education)

1. As an African American/Black student, tell me about your K-12 experience (elementary, middle school, high school).

2. As a K-12 student, what inspired or discouraged you about education? How have these challenges impacted how you feel about yourself?

3. How many African American male teachers did you have in K-12? What was that like?

4. Tell me about your decision to go to college. (How soon did you begin college after high school graduation? Why?) – probing question

5. As an African American/Black student, what was your college experience like?

6. As a college student, what inspired and discouraged you about education? How have these challenges impacted your self-efficacy or your belief in your own abilities to deal with these challenges?

7. How many African American male teachers did you have in college?

II. Challenges and Triumphs in becoming a K-12 Educator

1. Tell me about your decision to become an educator/selecting your college major?

(What was your original declared major? If it was not education, what made you change majors?) – probing questions

2. Tell me about the support you did or did not receive from your professors. How did this impact the belief you had about yourself as a teacher?

3. Tell me about any challenges you had in college (coursework, finances, campus life, etc.)? Explain how this impacted the belief in your abilities to persevere.

4. Tell me about any resources you utilized while in college. What did this tell you about your abilities and effort to reach your goal?

5. Tell me about your experience obtaining licensure and certification as a teacher? How did this impact how you feel about yourself?

III. Current Experiences working in an urban Alabama K-12 School District

1. Tell me about your experience in getting a teaching position?

2. Tell me about your role as an educator? Explain how confident you are in your abilities as an educator and why?

3. Tell me about your relationship with your supervisor? Colleagues? Students? (How was your confidence level shaped by your supervisor? Colleagues? Or Students?)- probing question

4. Tell me about any experience you have had working with a mentor in your current position? (How did their support impact your performance?) -probing question

5. Tell me about classroom management as an African American/Black educator? How has your classroom management impacted how you feel about yourself?

6. Tell me about your experiences in professional development and/or professional learning communities compared to your peers? How did those experiences impact how you felt about yourself?

7. What do you anticipate your professional growth to look like five years from now?

This concludes my interview. Is there anything else you would like to add? Do you have any more questions for me?

Thank you for participating in this interview. This study will assist in further research and provide insight into the lived experiences of African-American male novice K-12 teachers. Your confidentiality and responses will be maintained and hopefully you will be willing to participate in potential future interviews.

APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL FORM/SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM
Office of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use

470 Administration Building
701 20th Street South
Birmingham, AL 35294-0104
205.934.3789 | Fax 205.934.1301 | irb@uab.edu

APPROVAL LETTER

TO: Blackmon, Herbert L.

FROM: University of Alabama at Birmingham Institutional Review Board
Federalwide Assurance # FWA00005960
IORG Registration # IRB00000196 (IRB 01)
IORG Registration # IRB00000726 (IRB 02)

DATE: 22-Jun-2020

RE: IRB-300004591
The Lived Experiences of African American/Black Male K-12 Novice Educators

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The IRB reviewed and approved the Initial Application submitted on 13-May-2020 for the above referenced project. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Type of Review: Exempt
Exempt Categories: 2, with limited review
Determination: Exempt
Approval Date: 22-Jun-2020
Approval Period: No Continuing Review

Documents Included in Review:

- exempt.200513.docx
- flyer.200513.docx
- interview.200513.docx
- phonescript(gatekeepers).200513.docx
- phonescript.200513.docx
- pptletter.200513.docx
- recruitmentcomms.200513.docx
- surveyquest.200513.docx
- IRB PERSONNEL FORM

BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS

BUILDING LEADERS. IMPACTING THE WORLD.

Dr. Kecia Topping Chapman,
Executive Director of Assessment, Accountability and Research
Chair, Data Governance Committee
Email: Kchapman@bhm.k12.al.us

June 29, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Herbert Blackmon, Researcher

FROM: Dr. Kecia Topping Chapman
Chair, Data Governance Committee

RE: Dissertation Study Approval

Herbert Blackmon, researcher at the University of Alabama at Birmingham is conducting a dissertation study entitled, **"The Lived Experience of African American/Black Male K-12 Novice Educators"**. The purpose of this study is to disclose the narratives of African American male novice educators in an urban K-12 school system located in central Alabama. During this research study, Mr. Blackmon will recruit using purposive sampling and interview participants using utilizing semi-structured interview (SSI) Questions. Herbert Blackmon has permission to conduct this research project in Birmingham City Schools.

The Birmingham City School System approves this study as a means of gathering information for educational purposes. All information to be gathered will be done in a confidential and appropriate manner. At no time will this study be used in a way that would represent a potential risk to his subjects. The names of individuals, school system and all other information that would identify Birmingham City Schools will not be revealed in any published or oral form. The research question used in the study will not reflect Birmingham City Schools. Any additional research or study will require further approval of the school system.

Please contact the Birmingham Board of Education Department of Assessment, Accountability and Research at 205.231-5618 if there are any questions or concerns.

Herbert Blackmon — Herbert Blackmon, Researcher
Researcher's Signature of Agreement

June 29, 2020. — Date

2015 Park Place • Birmingham, AL 35203 • Telephone: 231-5618 • Fax: 231-5668