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Black Male Teachers and Their Ability to Break Limitations: A Critical Study into Why Black Male Teachers Choose to Stay in Education Despite the Barriers and Stereotypes Faced in Public School Districts of New Jersey

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Black Male Teachers and Their Ability to Break Limitations:

A Critical Study into Why Black Male Teachers Choose to Stay in Education Despite the Barriers and Stereotypes Faced in Public School Districts of New Jersey

by

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Abstract

The lack of Black male teachers in New Jersey is an ongoing problem. The underrepresentation of Black male teachers in the United States has been recognized as a racial injustice symptom and a cause. The widespread problem of Black male teachers being underrepresented leads to the justification for this study's need. Often, we are inundated with why Black males choose to forgo a teaching career as a profession. From systemic biases to low income to the trade being viewed as a "woman's job," there are qualitative studies on why there seems to be a gravitational pull away from teaching. However, the amount of empirical research about what it means for Black male teachers to stay in the educational field remains relatively small. This qualitative case study aimed to understand better Black male teachers' experiences concerning their underrepresentation in school districts in New Jersey and what drives them to continue teaching.

The central research question that guided this study is the leading causes of Black males' decision to stay within the educational field in New Jersey, with additional sub-questions to help guide the study. The participants were 13 Black male teachers recruited through personal email and social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn via purposeful sampling. In addition, participants took part in in-depth structured virtual interviews.

While addressing significant concerns, the current body of work has left vague assumptions about why Black male teachers decided to stay in education, even though the cultural and institutional constructs have been less than advantageous. Grounded in various personal history narratives and informed by gender-based pedagogy and critical race theory, this study reviewed the thoughts of Black male teachers in New Jersey and how they continue to stay engaged with complexities of self-identification, pedagogies based on systemic racism, and

authoritative figure expectations. This study aimed to provide unique perspectives for school districts and transformative educational leaders who want to create strategies for attracting, supporting, and retaining more Black male teachers.

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My final thank you and acknowledgment goes to my Lord and Savior. Thank you for granting me the life and ability to push through all obstacles that were put in my way. This accomplishment would not have happened without your light and love.

S. L.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Matthew. When I look into your eyes and hear your voice, I always go back to the day I held you in my arms and knew that you were a true blessing. Your words of disappointment in not having a Black male teacher encouraged me to complete this study. I hope you can get the experience of having a teacher who looks like you and holds you accountable for the greatness inside of you. When I think about all the difficult times that were endured, I know that it was all worth it because I got the opportunity to be your father. Words cannot express how I feel when I see a smile on your face and feel the warmth in my heart, knowing that your spirit is full of kindness and love. You are my world and give me strength each and every day. Through all of the struggles and celebrations, your love and support have guided me. All that I will ever ask of you is that you give 100% effort to everything that you do. I have laid down another challenge that I know you will tackle with open arms. I will support you every step of the way until you are ready to run on your own. I love you and look forward to your continued growth and maturation.

This dissertation is dedicated to you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Context of the Problem

Black male teachers have been underrepresented in the K-12 educational field (Vilson, 2015; Waite et al., 2018). Male teachers, in general, are uncommon, but African American male teachers and male teachers of other minority groups are even less common (Chmelynski, 2006). Of the over 3.2 million public school K-12 teachers nationwide, only 2% are Black males (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2021). This remains a sticking point for organizations created to increase recruitment efforts (Chmelynski, 2006). Typically, those organizations recruit individuals to place them in schools serving large populations of students of color in environments that lack resources and have higher-than-average turnover rates. Therefore, overlooking the importance of having Black male teachers in classrooms that are not predominantly composed of minority students is a grave mistake made by the education system. Theorists have concluded that Black educators, specifically Black male educators, positively impact children of all races and genders and the teaching profession as a whole (Green & Martin, 2018). Logically, then, the lack of a diverse educational staff undermines the path toward equity and fans the flames of social inequalities (Green & Martin, 2018). This is a critical consideration because the work of teachers is linked with the social-emotional identities, cultural knowledge, and experiences they bring to the classroom daily. Notably, such experiences and knowledge help all students gain an understanding of and learn from people of color to create a socially supportive comprehension of one another's disparities. This will increase the chances of teaching students about the complicated social and racial issues of the 21st century (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Several theorists have examined the need to increase the number of Black male teachers in school environments. Black male teachers can be role models, authority figures, and parental figures to the underserved minority Black population. The demand for new teachers is increasing overall, as almost one-third of the teaching force is over 50 years old, with anticipated retirements coming within 10 years (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Nationally, Black teachers' attrition rate averages approximately 18.9%, compared to their White counterparts' attrition rate of around 15% (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2016). Factors that contribute to the attrition rate for Black teachers include increased pressure to improve student outcomes (Evans & Leonard, 2013; Ford et al., 2011); standardized testing for teachers (Evans & Leonard, 2013; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Madkins, 2011); and increased access and opportunities to pursue other professional careers (Evans & Leonard, 2013; Madkins, 2011).

The increased attrition rate underscores the necessity of why recruiting Black teachers to work with students of color in both urban and small rural school districts continues to be a national priority. Moreover, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) showed that more than 80% of teachers are White, with the overwhelming percentage being White women, further underscoring the necessity of recruiting Black male teachers into K-12 classrooms (Grissom et al., 2015). Multiple studies have shown a definitive link between the presence of Black teachers, particularly Black male teachers, and increased academic performance among students of color; thus, the underrepresentation of Black male teachers in K-12 classrooms suggests that African American students may be adversely impacted by current teacher workforce demographics (Villegas et al., 2012). One potential illustration of this is high dropout rates, which remain disproportionately high among African American students (Poe, 2022).

Further, college attainment among African American students remains below the national norm (Leonard & Martin, 2013).

Over the last 20 years, educational organizations have encouraged, recruited, and tried to retain Black male teachers. Organizations such as The Black Men Teaching Initiative, The Bond Project, The Fellowship: Black Male Educators for Social Justice, and the Boston Teacher Residency: Male Teachers of Color have led this charge by engaging Black men in education (West et al., 2018). With varying efforts and support systems, Black male teachers are still only 2% of the teacher population in the United States (USDOE, 2016). Explicitly focusing on Black male teachers in New Jersey, this study looked at the immediate past of the Black male teachers selected to determine what prompted them to remain in the field of education. These past experiences influence the choices of Black male educators as well as the specific views of the educational system from the perspective of Black male teachers. This study will give a general understanding of barriers to entry, and it is the hope that this understanding will foster change in the future while highlighting the overall importance that Black male teachers have for students and vice versa.

Research completed by the NCES showed comparable data from 2003-04 and 2017-18, in which the percentage of Black educators reduced from 8% to 7% of K-12 educators in the United States. From that same data set, Hispanic and Asian teachers represented 9% and 2% of teachers, respectively, while White teachers comprised 81% of the distribution of teachers in the United States (USDOE, 2016). Statistics showed that the lack of diversity regarding minority educators only grew when the statistics are further broken down by gender. In the 2017-18 school year, 76% of the distribution of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools were female, while only 24% were male. The study surmised that “when considering gender and race,

we know that Black males make up only 2 percent of the teaching workforce nationwide" (USDOE, 2016). These statistics underscored the importance of recruiting and retaining Black male teachers in the K-12 education system.

In 2011, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan renewed his call for more Black men to become teachers in our nation's educational system. During a town hall discussion, along with the other panelists, Duncan emphasized the need for Black male teachers in elementary and middle school settings. Notably, several Black panelists stated that they did not have their first Black male teacher until they entered college (Sealey-Ruiz & Lewis, 2011). Despite the passage of over 10 years since Duncan's call to action, the lack of Black male representation as teachers remains an issue that compromises educational organizations today. Thus, the question that needs to be answered is "Why?" Why are Black men still not choosing to enter the teaching profession, even though studies have shown that the presence of Black male teachers impacts the students they teach? Why do Black men decide to stay in education and continue this career path? Understanding these questions may help break the current mold of education and its educators. Researchers have reinforced this need by asserting that there should be willingness and effort among educators to structure school cultures to ensure that individuals of diverse backgrounds are well-positioned to achieve in the field of education, regardless of their predispositions (Beachum & McCray, 2004).

Researchers Goings and Bianco (2016) theorized that the decision of Black males to bypass education as a career is influenced by their personal experiences, dealings with stereotypes, and lack of support within the K-12 school system. The current study reviewed these assertions while giving a differing perspective. Using the stated barriers, past experiences, and perceived stereotypes of the profession that have dictated and shaped the cultural view of Black

male teachers, the present study focused on the industry's positive aspects that encourage these Black male teachers. The resulting information will give a brief overview of what district and state leaders can implement to increase the targeted recruitment and retention efforts of Black male teachers, ultimately increasing the percentage of representation of African Americans within New Jersey's educational labor population.

Problem Statement

The present study addressed the problem of how to reverse the lack of representation of Black male teachers in the K-12 education system within New Jersey School Districts. Black male teachers are already considered a scarce commodity in the educational field, with that small presence primarily being in the urban educational landscape. Black male educators are almost nonexistent in suburban communities, despite targeted efforts to increase awareness regarding the necessity of equity and representation in urban, suburban, and rural educational contexts. With White females comprising the majority of teachers within New Jersey, there is undoubtedly an assumption that the state is not fostering diversity and inclusion in education (Jacquart et al., 2019), causing eligible Black male educators to pursue other career avenues outside of the classroom. This assumption was interrogated and challenged in the present study, allowing me as the researcher to determine the root cause of the Black males' decisions to stay in education. This, in turn, may help the overall systemic problem of recruiting and retaining Black male teachers in the K-12 education system.

In New Jersey, the teacher population comprises 6.6% of educators who identify as Black or African American, with only 1.5% identifying as male (New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), 2019). The highest concentration of Black male educators in New Jersey is within the urban school districts. Comparable views of traditionally suburban school districts show the

number of Black male teachers is significantly reduced (NJDOE, 2019). This data point is significant due to the funding allocation given to those school districts. In New Jersey, urban school districts receive considerably more state aid than suburban districts, which rely on funding from their local tax levies. While the present researcher did not debate the equitable distribution of the financing, he noted the allocation and distribution of the state's funding and why that is important in this context, which revolves around the reduction in funding from the state level. Reduction of educational financing at the state level forces local school districts to scale back educational services (Leachman et al., 2016), which often affects urban school districts more than suburban or rural ones.

Researchers have long documented the need for and importance of a more representative workforce (Shrestha & Parajuli, 2021). Much of the resulting literature has successfully promoted change and explained why the lack of increased representation would continue to create issues within school districts and filter down to their students (Johnson et al., 2019). To address the lack of equity, various researchers have documented the barriers and stereotypes that Black male teachers encounter at different stages of becoming a teacher (Haynes et al., 2020b). In Chapter 2 of the present study, this literature was reviewed in detail to describe and highlight the current status of Black male teachers in the K-12 education system.

Purpose of Study

Representation in the classroom matters. One of the principal goals of the present study was to demonstrate why representation by Black male teachers in the classroom is essential for Black students. Through this qualitative study, I aimed to understand better the Black male educator experience concerning the underrepresentation of Black male K-12 teachers within New Jersey school districts. Additionally, the present study helped understand why African

American male educators choose to remain in the profession while eliminating other career options. In New Jersey, the Black student population by percentage in the 2018-19 school year was 15% and the Black teacher population percentage was only 6.6%. That specific percentage would decrease to approximately 2% if the Black female teacher data were excluded. While the demographics nationwide vary, the study will give a general understanding of barriers that affect the decision made to remain a teacher, how these barriers influence Black male educators' views of the educational system, and the overall importance that Black male teachers have on students.

Research has shown that Black male students have been taught to respect and follow the lead of influential Black male figures in their lives (Taylor et al., 2019). From childhood, Black male students are taught to revere and respect Black male leaders in settings such as a church and in the classroom, where these principles of respect are nurtured throughout their personal and social development (Bell, 2014; Taylor et al., 2019). In addition, the nation is still trying to determine how to best help African American students improve their academic performance (Gougis, 2020). Yet, these efforts are likely confounded when the issue of lack of representation by Black male educators is ignored, as African American students are positively affected by African American educators (Gershenson et al., 2018; Redding, 2019). Yet, Black male teachers still only comprise 2% of the national teaching population, while the percentage of students who identify as Black is projected to remain at 15% through Fall 2029 (NCES, 2018). Significantly, the demographics of the elementary- and secondary-school educational workforce are projected to remain constant, even though the NCES has estimated that, by 2027, minority students will comprise 56% of student enrollment. These statistics underscore the need for diversity and representation by minority educators in the K-12 education system.

With these data alone, the need for Black male educators is an important goal that should be obtained for the students represented in both suburban and urban school districts. Notably, Black male teachers can use their experiences with oppression to understand their students' daily struggles with race and class oppression (Lynn, 2006; Warren, 2020). Consequently, there needs to be an understanding of what factors influence Black men to enter and remain in the teaching profession to help mitigate the achievement gaps that Black students face and to give those students the advantage of seeing a visual representation of Black male teachers. Researchers have concluded that school districts have aligned the achievement gap between African American male students and their Caucasian counterparts to teacher efficacy and expectation or the lack thereof (Burris-Corbett et al., 2008; Soland, 2018; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Teacher efficacy and expectation have been shown to impact the achievement of African American students negatively due, in part, to the lack of Black male teachers in the school setting (Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Jackson & Moore, 2008).

Due to the shortage of minority teachers in the United States, there are many instances in which students of all racial backgrounds have never had the experience of being taught by a minority educator (Bryan & Ford, 2014). The information gathered from the present study can be used by principals, superintendents, and human resources personnel in their recruitment and retention efforts of Black male educators. The current research tackled the goal of understanding these Black male educators' perceptions of the overall educational system and what influenced their decision to remain in education. While 2% is not enough representation, the impact of those included in that small percentage continues to be felt for generations. Researchers Au et al. (2016) discussed how Black male teachers offer culturally relevant and emotional skills that disrupt educational inequalities that Black students encounter in the K-12 school system. While

looking specifically at Black male students in secondary education, having at least one Black male teacher increases the likelihood of graduating from high school, which shows a significant and meaningful effect on those students (Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Scott et al., 2017). Through the present study, I worked toward understanding Black male teachers' decisions about remaining in the classroom in order to learn from those decisions.

Significance of Study

The idea of effective education for Black male students comes into question when their academic achievements are set to a lower standard than that of other students. Theorist Craig Saddler asserted that while effective education is a fundamental foundation for the progress of people and society, African American male students have been filtered into lower educational tracks, lending credence to the notion that effective education is different based on one's culture (Saddler, 2005). Unfortunately, the views of some educators are that African American students may be intellectually inferior to their White counterparts, a systemic racist view that threatens the educational opportunities of African American students. Saddler stated that African American students are filtered into lower educational tracks at such a rapid pace that they often are the unfortunate victims of miseducation. The disproportionate percentage of Black males being put into special education programs compared to their White counterparts supports these thoughts and notions (Hung et al., 2020).

The misconception of perceived intellectual inferiority and the compromised ability of African American students to process information is at the core of why having a diverse workforce in education is essential. In the last decade, African American males have lagged behind their Caucasian counterparts in educational progress (Hung et al., 2020). Still, there is continuous evidence of a gender gap in academic achievement among all African American

students (Cook et al., 2018; Gibbs et al., 2008). Specifically, African American females graduate high school at a rate of 81%, while African American males graduate high school at 72% (Newton & Sandoval, 2015). It is often asserted that the gender gap in educational attainment is more significant for Blacks than Whites. However, historical trends comparing the Black and White gender gap have received surprisingly little attention. Analysis of historical data from the U.S. Census shows that gender has evolved differently for Whites and Blacks (Buchmann et al., 2008).

The disparity in academic achievement is a persistent trend spanning decades and encompassing all racial and ethnic groups (Hung et al., 2020). However, the difference in academic achievement between the percentages of African American males and African American females continues to be disproportionate, compared to the gender achievement gap of other racial and ethnic groups (Lavy & Sand, 2018). The achievement gap conversation becomes almost lost when applied to African American male students living in suburban communities. While Black male students in suburban environments generally outperform Black male students in urban districts, the disparities in achievement compared to White students tend to transcend their socioeconomic standing and geographical locations (Hung et al., 2020). Like students in urban communities, Black males who live in the suburbs still lag behind their White counterparts in graduation rates, advanced placement classes, and standardized tests (Pringle et al., 2010).

The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau data indicated a shift in the number of African Americans who live in the suburbs increased by approximately five percentage points (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). African Americans rose to around 14 million between 1990 and 2000. This increase corresponded to 39% of African Americans living in suburban communities (Smithsimon, 2012; Wasserman & O'Leary, 2010). Due to the additional demographic shifts in the next decade, the

number of African Americans living in the suburbs increased another 7% to approximately 51% by 2010. Considering these data, it could be concluded that about half of the minority groups now live in the suburbs (Smithsimon, 2012; Wasserman & O'Leary, 2010). Consequently, the dilemma for educational researchers is why African American males lag behind White students in suburban educational settings. The present study investigated the need for additional Black male teachers in the educational space to close the existing disparity gap.

Summary of Conceptual Frameworks

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was employed to frame this study and underpin the analysis of inequalities that create disparities in the number of African American male teachers in the K-12 education system. CRT is provided as a method for exploring race, power, and infrastructure differences in a variety of different fields. The name "Critical Race Theory"' was coined from emerging methodologies that extend to principles related to legal racial equity (Delgado, 1995). CRT theory was first created to explore the intersectionality of race and power relationships (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The widespread application of CRT has shown that the theory is ideal for considering how large infrastructures and current systems serve to subjugate and dominate people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Education, like any other sizeable infrastructural system, is no exception to the need to address racial and ethnic equality. In the present study, I utilized CRT to understand the relationship between race and power within the K-12 education system regarding the retention of Black male teachers.

The study further aligned the ideas of CRT and gender-relevant pedagogy. These frames are being looked at specifically in the realm of education, which enables independent and critical thought while being self-reflective on life and how the intersection of race and gender affects educational development. These specific theoretical thoughts are essential for understanding the

multilayered inequality in the academic structure for Black educators. CRT insists that society take into context the distinctive realities and lived experiences regarding racism in the United States. Critical race theorists have purported that without the voice of Black people, contextualizing their daily-lived experiences with oppression to obtain a clear and critical understanding of their struggles with race and racism both in and out of the educational system would not be possible (Yull et al., 2014). The present study examined the role of Black male educators in the K-12 education system within the context of critical race theory. Bringing CRT into education creates the opportunity to be critical of the educational system and how the system has developed and currently deals with racial issues and biases. Being in an academic structure gives researchers the ability to provide solutions that enhance education for all subjects, including for African Americans. As previously discussed, this study looked at why Black male teachers decide to enter and remain in the teaching profession. Researchers have concluded that failure to contextualize the Black educational experience limits our educators' and policymakers' ability to understand better and improve educational opportunities for Black children (Yull et al., 2014).

CRT transforms and studies the relationships between power, racism, and race. With this type of study, perception and understanding of one's identity and ideological standings are extremely important because these factors both tell a collective story and depict the thoughts and feelings of each participant. School districts have played a distinct role in creating racial inequality. Participants' voices are necessary to establish a linkage between education and CRT so that a complete analysis can be performed (Dixson, 2018). Theorists in education have studied and examined critical race theories and how racism is present in mainstream education. They

have concluded that educational structures have historically served to recreate unequal power relations and academic outcomes (Zamudio et al., 2011).

The CRT within education from the perspective of this study offered the opportunity to look at how Black male teachers are disadvantaged entities in the educational system. The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies confront, but it places these issues in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, setting, group and self-interest and emotions, and the unconscious (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Critical theory would approach the interdependency of the development of society, the development of culture, and the development of the individual in its dynamic and would thereby create, at the same time, a distance from it (Masschelein, 2004).

Using the CRT framework to guide this study allowed each participant to tell their own story and experiences from their point of view, being a disenfranchised aspect of education as a whole. Framing the discussion helped the participants process what factors affected their thoughts and actions. This was an essential part of the study, as the participants were asked to evaluate experiences they had in the past and discuss why they may have impacted their choice to remain in education. The participants were given an opportunity to reflect on the experiences that led them to choose teaching as their profession and identify personal barriers within the teaching profession. This process is what Masschelein (2004) described as being able to self-critique instead of allowing personal bias to dictate the discussion. The autonomous, critical, self-reflective person appears as a historical model of self-conduct whereby power operates precisely through the intensification of reflectiveness and critique rather than through repression, alienation, or negation (Masschelein, 2004).

Overview of Research Design

The qualitative research for the study was structured to be a narrative research design. I chose this design because the study focused on collecting stories and individual experiences from each Black male teacher. Through this process, I consolidated the thoughts and experiences of 13 Black male teachers and used that data to answer the targeted research question. I collected data for this study by performing semi-structured open-ended interviews, recording the audio data from the interviews, and transcribing the interviews. Once the transcriptions were completed, I used NVivo qualitative data analysis software to assist with organizing and analyzing codes and creating categories. The organization of these codes was by topic and expressed experiences that each teacher has discussed.

The population for this study was 13 Black male teachers currently teaching public school K-12 in New Jersey. Those interested in participating in this study were recruited through email and social media. Because I used personal accounts, I did not require approval from the participants' respective districts. The outreach consisted of individual teachers in different school districts in New Jersey. This kept the sample diverse in their district experiences. Having a diverse cohort allowed each teacher's perspective to be captured.

This study dealt directly with the experiences of the participating Black male teachers currently teaching in New Jersey. By creating open-ended questions for each participant, I created a dialogue and collected stories that depicted their points of view. I discussed why they chose to stay in the K-12 educational system. These data shaped the present study and may impact possible future research.

Limitations

I must state that I am a Black male working in the education field in the administration and business operations side of a school district in New Jersey. I am not a teacher, nor have I taught a class on any level, as I chose not to pursue a teaching degree or certification to teach via an alternate route program. However, I grew up in the suburban school district of Teaneck, New Jersey. I was fortunate enough to have three Black male teachers, one each in elementary, middle, and high school settings. From the third grade until my senior year of high school, having only three Black male educators was more than most other students ever saw, but this serves as an example of the need for an increased effort for students who grow up as I did. I included my comments and feelings throughout my field notes to be mindful of my potential bias. I coded these notes appropriately to separate my reactions and thoughts from the experiences discussed during the interview process. One limitation of the research study is that I only interviewed Black male teachers. My research attempt was to understand the specific experiences of the selected Black male teachers. Based on that, I did not feel the need to include other genders or races in the discussion. Another limitation is that this study solely focused on public school districts in New Jersey. While the Black male teachers did not represent their districts in this study, their respective experiences in those districts were vital to this research study. Not using districts in other states was an intentional decision to keep the sampling structured. While this study will be beneficial in its overall goal, it does not represent nationwide views, given the study's focus on the State of New Jersey.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following central research question:

RQ: What are the leading causes of Black males' decision to stay in the educational field in New Jersey?

The sub-research questions included the following:

SRQ1: What factors influence Black men to choose teaching as a profession?

SRQ1a: What are the perceived barriers of entry for Black male teachers?

SRQ1b: What are the perceived opportunities of access for Black male teachers?

SRQ2: How have Black male teachers' K-12 experiences informed their decisions to stay in education as a career path?

SRQ2a: Do race and gender influence the Black male teachers' perspectives on the teaching profession?

Definition of Terms

African American/Black: Used to depict any individual of African descent. This incorporates American relatives of oppressed Africans brought to the United States.

Urban School Districts: The NCES (2018) defined urban schools in three classifications. Large: Schools inside an urbanized area and principal city with a population of 250,000 or more; Midsize: Schools inside an urbanized area and central city with a population of 250,000 or less; Small: Schools inside an urbanized area and principal city with a population of 100,000 or less.

Suburban School Districts: The NCES (2018) defined suburban schools in three classifications. Large: Schools outside an urbanized area and principal city with a population of 250,000 or more; Midsize: Schools outside an urbanized area and central city with a population of 250,000 or less; Small: Schools outside an urbanized area and principal city with a population of 100,000 or less.

Teacher Effectiveness: The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, in partnership with the Educational Testing Service (ETS), defined teacher effectiveness through five points: (a) Have high expectations for all students and help students learn, as measured by value-added or other test-based growth measures; (b) Contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students; (c) Use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities; (d) Contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness; and (e) Collaborate with other teachers, administration, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success (Goe et al., 2008).

Gender-Based Pedagogy: Examines the meaning of gender in the classroom by exploring the teaching and learning of gender in writing and reading experiences (Henderson, 2014).

Critical Race Theory: CRT involves understanding racial inequality in education in terms of the role of power and control when discussing racial subordination (Brooks, 2009).

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the study which aimed to address a pervasive problem in the educational system: the K-12 education system's failure to recruit and retain Black male teachers. Through this qualitative study, we can better understand the Black male educator experience concerning the underrepresentation of Black male K-12 teachers in New Jersey school districts. Additionally, the present study investigated why African American male educators choose to remain in the profession while eliminating other career options. Chapter 1 provided a detailed background to the problem at hand, highlighting the importance of having Black male teachers in the classroom. After addressing the problem and purpose of the study, I detailed the research questions for this study. Next, I presented the theoretical frameworks chosen for the study, namely critical race theory and gender-relevant pedagogy. Finally, I

outlined the research method and design selected for the study and discussed its limitations. In Chapter 2, I critically examine the literature relevant to the study to give other researchers a more detailed understanding of the background knowledge required.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The underrepresentation of Black male teachers in the U.S. K-12 educational system is a pervasive problem that states, districts, and outside organizations are still trying to address. In 2011 at Morehouse College, a historically Black college, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated that less than 3% of the nation's teachers are persons of color. While childhood and adolescence are impressionable times for all children, it is essential for Black children because it has been shown that Black teachers serve as important mentors and role models for them (Alexander, 2022). Duncan's 2011 address highlighted an important question:

> Why is there a need to expand the reach and representation of Black male educators and minority instructors in general?

Despite this great need for Black K-12 teachers, there is still a dearth of Black male teachers in the K-12 educational system (Sandles, 2020). The purpose of the present study was to gain a clearer understanding of the Black male educator experience concerning the underrepresentation of Black male K-12 teachers in New Jersey school districts. Additionally, the present study aimed to understand why African American male educators choose to remain in the profession while eliminating other career options. It is first necessary to identify and define the underlying problem of the impact that a lack of Black male educators has on Black students, the educational system, and society as a whole to understand why Black male educators choose to stay in the teaching profession. These topics, among others, are the subject of the literature review presented in this chapter.

Minority instructors are essential role models for those within the same minority group and other minority students (Alexander, 2022; Villegas et al., 2012). This is due, in part, to the notion that minority educators have walked miles in the shoes of their students and critically

understand the obstacles, challenges, and triumphs of the minority student population (Alexander, 2022). The literature review focuses on these essential topics while discussing the growing divide between the K-12 education system and Black male teachers. The literature review also focuses on why ongoing research must occur to understand more fully why Black men choose to teach so that practices can be implemented to ensure they remain in the field.

There continues to be a disconnect between the need for Black male teachers and the actual entrance of those individuals into the educational workforce. Significantly, Black male teachers and White female teachers lie at opposite ends of the employment spectrum. While Black male teachers are underrepresented in the K-12 educational system, White females are overrepresented; it is estimated that approximately 50% of K-12 teachers are White females (Young & Young, 2020). Statistics have shown that around 2% of K-12 teachers are Black males, making the Black male educator an anomaly in K-12 classrooms (USDOE, 2016). These statistics are striking when one considers that approximately 50% of K-12 students in U.S. public schools are Black students (Maxwell, 2014). As such, it is essential to understand why Black male teachers choose the teaching profession and remain in education so that Black male representation can be increased through career longevity.

Reviewing other literary works, I attempted to establish a link between education and critical race theory (CRT). To do so, participants' voices are necessary so that a complete analysis can be performed (Dixson, 2018). For example, Jackson (2015) conducted a study with teachers of color, focusing on their understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy and their perspectives on the environment and curriculum of their teacher education program at a predominantly White institution regarding their development. Findings from that study concluded how institutional policies and practices are incorporated into schools that oppress

marginalized racial groups (Jackson, 2015). In the present study, I gathered data directly from participants to better understand their experiences from their perspectives. Chapter 2 now reviews literature consistent with the experiences and stereotypes Black male educators have faced, the current state of the Black male educator, existing barriers, and available opportunities at their disposal. The gap within the available literature that this study will fill is the perspective of Black male educators actually remaining in the profession rather than avoiding it or resigning early in their teaching careers.

Background

This background section avoids the history of slavery in the United States and the fact that Black men and women were not allowed to learn how to read and write but overcame this by learning and teaching each other. In the milestone *Brown v. Board of Education* case, the 1954 Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional to continue school segregation in the United States. Before *Brown v. Board of Education*, the percentage of Black educators was only 21%, compared to the 79% of White educators, with the majority of Black educators employed in schools in the southern United States (Fultz, 1995). Furthermore, there were roughly 82,000 Black educators by 1964, but approximately 38,000 of those instructors lost their positions during the Civil Rights Movement (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Epps, 2002). After integration mandated by *Brown v. Board of Education*, Black students entered schools that previously served only White students. However, Black educators did not follow this same integration pattern, as they were systematically excluded from schools in the southern United States (Smith & Smith, 1973). While discussing the departure of Black educators in the era after *Brown v. Board of Education*, Fultz (1995) surmised that there was a systematic and deliberate practice by those in powerful positions to reduce and hinder the Black educator population in efforts to

undermine the decision of the Supreme Court. These findings give credence to the tenets of critical race theory—namely that racism is a systematic, pervasive societal construct promoting White-dominated culture in the United States.

Analyst Fultz (2004) hypothesized that the systematic dismissal of Black educators, particularly in the southern United States, allowed for the continuation of racist practices by southern educational committees, school directors, and government officials, ultimately sabotaging the livelihood and authority of African American educators. Strategies used to repress the representation of Black educators included unjustifiable excusals, downgrades, constrained abdications, lack of recruitment, token advancements, decreased compensations, reduced liability, and compulsion to teach subjects or grade levels other than those for which Black educators were prepared to teach (Fultz, 2004). This practice was effective because many White parents did not want their children taught by someone who was not White; as a result, Black teachers became minority in the school system that educated Black students (Kohli, 2009).

The lack of representation of Black educators in the K-12 education system is still a pervasive problem in the U.S. school system today. In 2003, data from NCES showed that the nation's minority teacher population was far below that of the student population by percentage. Additionally, it showed that approximately 40% of schools nationwide did not have a teacher of color on staff (NCES, 2018). The same data set found that minority teachers had a higher employment rate in districts with 30% or more students of color. In 2001, the Black student population only comprised 17% of the student population; the Black teacher population did not rise above 6% (NCES, 2018). Significantly, these statistics have not dramatically changed over time. According to the most recent NCES data set for the 2017-18 school year, only 7% of K-12 educators were Black (USDOE, 2016). Perhaps more importantly, in 2013, the USDOE reported

that only 9% of the students enrolled in teacher preparation programs in 2009-10 identified as Black, indicating that very few Black individuals chose to teach as a profession (Jeter & Melendez, 2022). These statistics serve as an essential baseline for the following discussion, focusing on factors that influence Black females and White males to pursue careers in education.

The Motivation of Black Females to Teach

Until the passage of Title IX in 1972, colleges and universities could legally prevent women from enrolling in selected degree fields. This effectively maintained a pipeline of women towards a relatively small number of female-dominated professions, including teaching (Wesely et al., 2016). While all significant fields are open to women today, there remains a distinct gender imbalance in undergraduate majors. In 2014, women earned 80% of the bachelor's degrees in education, creating a female-dominated candidate pool for new teaching positions (Wesely et al., 2016).

Notably, the road to change depends on society systematically breaking down barriers and building extensions to progress. It is noted that the population of Black women in education has provided significant achievement and leadership in the field. Teaching is a solid professional skill among numerous African American women because of their capacity to transcend difficulties and express complex concepts to students while simultaneously nurturing and mentoring students (Acosta, 2019; Green, 2005). Researchers have found that this trend starts in primary and secondary school, where Black girls earn higher test scores than Black boys (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Black women enter and graduate from undergraduate and graduate schools with higher degrees than Black men, leading to Black women being more widely represented in postsecondary administration than their Black male counterparts (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). In 2009, the NCES distributed measurable information on educational degrees

earned by sex and race. According to the data, African American females procured 66% of 4-year college educations, 71% of graduate degrees, and 65% of specialist certifications affirmed to African American undergraduates (NCES, 2018). These data suggested that African American women are more likely to pursue higher education than African American men.

The educational advancements of African American women have afforded them opportunities to play a critical role in the empowerment of African American communities, thereby uplifting the African American race (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). It has been said that Black teachers, both male and female, do not enter teaching because they encountered negative experiences in school; these experiences, in turn, shaped their views on the teaching profession and their decision to forgo education as a career option (Gordon, 1994). However, in more recent studies, researchers have found that Black teachers believed they have a direct and vital influence on student outcomes and achievement (Beachum & McCray, 2004). Moreover, this study argued that Black teachers, particularly Black females, found it necessary to provide culturally responsive teaching to Black and White students (Beachum & McCray, 2004).

A survey of qualitative, quantitative, and integrative synthesis studies highlighted the significance of Black female educators on classroom encounters, student experiences, and essential instruction that regularly improves student accomplishments. A recent quantitative analysis demonstrated that Black male students with Black teachers have higher reading scores than Black male students with White teachers; similar findings were found for Black female students who had a Black or Hispanic teacher (Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). Other studies have shown that Black female teachers' previous educational experiences frequently impacted their assumptions of students, particularly for students of comparable backgrounds (Beachum & McCray, 2004). The qualitative research conducted by Beachum and McCray (2004) showed

that Black female teachers found teaching to be an extension of motherhood. These findings were consistent with those of Greene (2020), who found that Black female teachers believed their roles to be nurturing mentors and maternal figures to students.

In an academic analysis of exemplary teachers committed to social justice, the maternal image is visible in the pedagogy of Black female teachers (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Haynes et al., 2020b). These roles were shown to be derived from the teachers' upbringing and connection to other maternal figures such as grandmothers, teachers, and women in the church who instilled the premise of sharing the responsibility of child-rearing and teaching children (McArthur & Lane, 2019). In another study, Black female educators reported that their interactions as students with their mothers or maternal figures shaped their perceptions of education through those strong relationships (Beachum & McCray, 2004; Haynes et al., 2020a). A sense of communal education has been instilled in Black female teachers. They believed education goes beyond teaching within the walls of school (Beachum & McCray, 2004; McArthur & Lane, 2019).

Earlier research has shown that Black female teachers sought to take on the roles and responsibilities of their families and communities, and education was their path to progression (Garibaldi, 1991). Black female teachers chose to teach partly due to the connection between teaching and mothering (Haynes et al., 2020a). African American women teachers used the familiar and familial mother-child relationship as a guide for their interactions with students (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Black female teachers saw their mother-child relationship with students as a central resistance to patriarchal and racial domination (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Many Black female K-12 teachers stated that their intentions in teaching were to provide all children with social, cultural, and racial competence and skills for scholastic excellence (Rasheed

et al., 2020). Congruent with this notion, Beachum and McCray (2004) stated that Black female teachers viewed themselves as responsible for educating students and caring for the community's children inside and outside of school.

In summary, the literature has suggested that Black females choose the teaching profession out of a desire to help and nurture their communities' children. The concepts of motherhood and education are entwined in the Black community because women have dominated education since the start of the 19th century (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Notably, Black female teachers get satisfaction from nurturing and protecting students while promoting academic excellence (McKinney de Royston et al., 2021). The body of literature has also suggested that Black women historically saw the teaching profession as a way to fight, through education, the stereotype of society, both for themselves and for their students. Finally, it has been found that Black female educators believe they are ethically responsible for the protection of their students in and out of the school (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Having examined why Black females choose to teach, I now turn to why another demographic, White men, decide to enter the teaching profession.

White Male Teachers in Education

Academic institutions replicate systemic advantages for White academics and structural disadvantages for professors of color, much like many other institutions do (Brooms & Brice, 2017). In their 2009 study on racial climate, Jayakumar et al. discovered that universities with a hostile environment for faculty of color scored highly in terms of keeping White faculty. Often in education, racial divides come from an underlying historical academic hierarchy that has been exhibited throughout the years (McKay et al., 2000). This hierarchy, as described by McKay et al. (2000), shows education as a career field dominated by White men over their counterparts.

While, statistically, education is a field that employs more White females than any other racial demographic (NCES, 2018), White male teachers currently have a higher average salary than the salaries of their male and female counterparts. In the 2017-18 school year, female teachers had a lower average base salary than male teachers. Additionally, White teachers had a four-percentage point advantage in compensation over Black teachers (NCES, 2018).

Researchers have examined how women and educators of color frequently receive harsher assessments from schools and teachers, compared to White male teachers' performance (McKay et al., 2000). Teaching young children has been portrayed as a feminine and low-status occupation (Drudy, 2008; Moosa & Bhana, 2018). As such, it is less appealing as a profession to men than to women, but the White male teachers who do enter the profession are afforded certain privileges (Moosa & Bhana, 2018). These privileges include the expectations that students hold for their educators who are women and of color, compared to those of their White male educators, thus making it difficult for exemplar evaluations that directly affect salary and tenure considerations (Johnsrud, 1993; McKay et al., 2000). It is believed that part of this disparity is due to the implicit bias of hegemonic masculinity, which continues to reproduce social inequalities from which White men benefit (Moosa & Bhana, 2018). This can be attributed to how the classroom and instruction are constructed to reinforce a specific thought process of the educators tasked with teaching (McKay et al., 2000).

While understanding the matriarchal constructs of education, examining the patriarchal constructs of advancement into the administrative side of education is essential. Messner noted the ability of White male teachers to experience a streamlined pipeline to administration and their ability to enter into the education career path as a pathway to being in leadership (McKay et al., 2000). In 2015-16, about 78% of public school principals were White, 11% were Black, and

8% were Hispanic (NCES, 2018). The American Association of School Administrators, also known as AASA, and the School Superintendents Association, performed a nationwide study in which they found that 91% of superintendents nationally are White and 76% are male. Additionally, race and gender impact career paths in education administration (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Vail (1999) discovered a gender difference in the direction of the superintendency. Males' professional paths typically started as teachers and ended as superintendents of high schools (Robinson et al., 2017). Specifically, teachers, elementary principals, central office directors, and superintendents were women's career paths (Robinson et al., 2017). These data points underscore the ease of access to higher positional levels in the education industry for White male teachers (Robinson et al., 2017).

In education, White male teachers benefit from being an assumed authority figure instead of earning that distinction through creativity and relationships. When women educators or educators of color enter the field of education, they wait to display all of the signs of authority needed for a seamless transition into the field (McKay et al., 2000). By contrast, White male educators are likely to begin from a position of assumed and automatically accepted authority and respect (McKay et al., 2000).

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) contends that racism is common in today's society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Patton et al., 2015). The construction of race has a new definition; while it is disguised, it still has the same offensive effect on minorities. The classifications have categorized groups, which bring forth negative stereotypes of minorities that are the notions of conceptual Whiteness, for example, "middle class-ness" and "intelligence," and conceptual Blackness, for instance, "gangs" and "welfare" (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Racism

is a form of injustice accepted in the United States and will remain a feature with permanency (Patton et al., 2015). CRT understands the social situation of race, racial lines, and hierarchies and tries to improve it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Critical analysis of Whiteness is a critique of the social construct, which consistently lends power to those who identify as White (Gillborn, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). The danger lies in the intangibility of Whiteness, whereby many have little to no awareness of their self-propagating role in perpetuating their power roles (Gillborn, 2006). CRT also maintains that the world is divided regarding race, with Whites as oppressors and Blacks as victims (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

CRT in educational settings examines the existence of race, racism, stereotypes, and classism (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Exploring education through a lens of race, CRT directly acknowledges the voices of minorities that cannot be heard (Ladson-Billings, 1998). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), the five tenets of CRT include: (a) the assumption that racism is normal and not aberrant; (b) the concept of an interest convergence; (c) the social construction of race; (d) the concept of storytelling and counter-storytelling; and (e) the belief that Whites have received and benefited from civil rights legislation.

Critical race studies in education are researched through various methods, which borrow from diverse traditions in the law, sociology, ethnic studies, and other educational fields to create a robust analysis of race and racism as a social, political, and economic system of advantages and disadvantages (Lynn & Parker, 2006). In addition, researchers have highlighted the need for educators to be aware of the racial foundations within the education framework (Lynn, 2004). This frame of thought is called Critical Race Pedagogy. Critical race theorists have defined it as the analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education that relies on the perceptions, experiences, and practices of educators of color (Lynn, 2004). Furthermore, Dixson

and Rousseau Anderson (2017) contended that the fundamental principles of CRT offer a framework for evaluating the previous effort in education and a way to ascertain what may still need to be accomplished. These principles include:

1. CRT in education argues that racial inequity in education is the logical outcome of a system of achievement premised on the competition.
2. CRT in education examines the role of education policy and educational practices in constructing racial inequity and perpetuating normative Whiteness.
3. CRT in education rejects the dominant narrative about the inherent inferiority of people of color and the normative superiority of White people.
4. CRT in education rejects historicism and examines the historical linkages between contemporary educational inequity and historical patterns of racial oppression.
5. CRT in education engages in intersectional analyses that recognize how race is mediated by and interacts with other identity markers (i.e., gender, class, sexuality, linguistic background, and citizenship status).
6. CRT in education agitates and advocates for meaningful outcomes that redress racial inequity. CRT does not merely document disparities. (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2017)

Using a CRT framework, I explored in this study a clearer understanding of minority teachers' experiences concerning the underrepresentation of minority K-12 teachers in urban school districts in the United States. CRT was the study's core theory, focusing on how race and racism toward minorities are experienced. CRT acknowledges that the voices of minorities have been silenced, distorted, and ignored in ways that misrepresent one's shared experiences (Bimper, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Minority voices are essential because they are a form of

storytelling that enables the oppressed to express the pain caused by their oppressors (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Minorities will continue to be oppressed by society as long as their images are vividly portrayed in stories (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This study, then, centered the voices of minorities on CRT to assist in the fight against racism and to understand the experiences of these minorities.

Barriers to Choosing Education as a Profession

There needs to be a clear understanding of the barriers that directly affect Black males from entering the teaching profession to combat the decreasing number of Black male teachers. Various issues around educational attainment, race, class, and gender stand as barriers for African American males to enter teaching (Bianco et al., 2011). In his investigation of minority teachers' impressions of education, Garibaldi (1991) revealed that compensation was an obstacle for 78%, the absence of parental help was an obstruction for 66%, and the lack of collaboration with colleagues was a hindrance for 59% (Ford et al., 1997; Garibaldi, 1991). Still, other barriers reported included the lack of Black male teachers already in the profession, implying that Black men do not have experience with Black male educators as role models (Dinkins & Thomas, 2016).

The most common barrier within the standing literature was money. Researchers from the Economic Policy Institute found that the average weekly income of teachers was approximately 17% less compared to comparable salaries in other industries. This study, reported in 2016, found that while the pay gap was reduced, the difference might have been attributed to the trade-off of increased benefits (Allegretto & Mishel, 2016). Concurrently, minority teachers faced an additional pay disparity. In 2011, the USDOE found that teachers with higher than 30% enrollment of minority students were getting paid $2,500 on average less than schools with lower

enrollment data. This information corresponded with the data presented by NCES, which stated that minority teachers were more likely to be hired at school districts with a higher minority student enrollment. One can gather that the two data points intersect, leading to the assumption that minority teachers are paid less than their counterparts on average.

Additional barriers to entering the education system lie within the educational structure itself. For example, while most of the literature has concentrated on economic barriers, it is possible to say that career advancement holds the same weight as finances. The accentuation on monetary advantages and vocation portability has its hypothetical roots in the human resources hypothesis, which places that workers go about as insightful work market members and explore all through various callings by surveying the financial advantages and expenses of such moves (Liu & Meyer, 2005). Another leading barrier for Black male teachers is the prospect of job and career stability and accessibility. Typically, Black men are less likely to be hired and are more likely to be fired than their White counterparts (Royster, 2003). Indeed, compared to their White counterparts, Black men experience income inequality, despite their class standings (Couch & Fairlie, 2010; Hamilton et al., 2011). This barrier also has implications for the retention of Black male teachers, as minorities are more likely than others to leave the teaching profession (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Indeed, research has shown that secondary school teachers, male educators, downtown metropolitan instructors, and African American and Latino educators are more bound to leave the teaching profession than other categories of teachers (Ford et al., 1997).

Student discipline issues have been regularly mentioned as another barrier that influences the retention of Black male teachers. However, researchers Liu and Meyer (2005) published results from data gathered in 1994-95 that demonstrated educators were dismayed by the increasing disciplinary issues of Black students. Notably, a lack of parental and institutional

support for student behavioral needs tended to fall on the teachers, who become responsible for disciplinary issues. Black male teachers reportedly felt they must be disciplinarians in school settings, often putting them in the parental roles of their students (Brockenbrough, 2018). In his 2018 study, Brockenbrough discussed the roles of Black male teachers as disciplinarians. He found that Black male teachers struggled to adapt to the authoritarian disciplinary personas that others expected of them, given the disproportionate assignment of disciplinary responsibilities to Black male teachers (Brockenbrough, 2018).

Howard (2014) argued that a direct obstacle to Black males becoming teachers is related to this group's low graduation rates from high school, suggesting that not all Black males had had the opportunity to attend a college to pursue a career in teaching. Compared to the present study, a study by Pabon et al. (2011) examined the effects of recruiting Black male teachers in an urban school district. This study was performed in the New York public school system, which allowed for a large sample size that could be used in correlation with the school districts in New Jersey (Pabon et al., 2011). The study found that the teaching pool for Black males was low due to the shortage of Black men who succeeded in New York high schools. These harmful data allowed Black male teachers to be targeted for recruitment into high school networks in New York (Pabon et al., 2011).

Additionally, Pabon et al. (2011) found that Black male teachers in New York took advantage of the recruitment efforts to gain a higher salary than some of their counterparts because of the high demand in the school system. Other scholars have expanded on this research nationwide, stating that only about 50% of Black male high school students graduate. This implied that some Black men do not have the opportunity to pursue teaching (Howard, 2014). While recent statistics have demonstrated an increase in Black male students entering higher

education, Black men still face significant challenges in retention and graduation from colleges and universities (Brooms, 2018). Overall, Black males represent only 8% of all undergraduates in higher education (Harper & Porter, 2012). These statistics notwithstanding, Black males who graduate high school and attend college are less likely to select teaching as a profession, perhaps due to other career choices (Toldson & Lemmons, 2011).

When further examining the lack of Black men graduating from high schools, Goings and Bianco (2016) argued that part of the reason for decreased graduation rates in this population was attributable to the negative perceptions of the teaching profession before leaving high school. Additionally, they discovered that Black men who graduated high school did not specifically want to enter the teaching profession because of negative experiences in school, including racial stereotypes, biases, lower expectations compared to their counterparts, and gender microaggressions that made them feel less masculine (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Other requirements, including the PRAXIS exam, may serve as barriers for Black men entering the teaching profession (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Interestingly, Goings and Bianco found that the PRAXIS assessments were not culturally relevant and created a cultural barrier for Black men to become teachers.

In summary, many barriers may influence Black men to pursue careers outside education. Some of these barriers are capitalist, including a lack of financial resources associated with the profession. Other barriers are cultural, as many Black men have not had the experience of having Black male educators in their time in school. This lack of mentorship from Black men can, in turn, influence the decisions of Black students about entering the teaching profession. Still, other barriers are institutional, with Black male teachers reporting being on the receiving end of discrimination, gender bias, and racial microaggressions.

Opportunities to Choose Education as a Profession

The notion of making a difference in the lives of children is a motivating factor that has been extensively studied and is one reason why many men and women become teachers, regardless of gender and racial demographics. A research study by Brown (2012) researched the motivations of Black male teachers for choosing the profession. The study demonstrated that numerous Black male teachers reported becoming teachers to help support Black male students as they transitioned from young boys into young men (Brown, 2012). In a study of why African American male teachers chose to enter the teaching profession, Lewis (2006) derived three distinct reasons from the research. First, participants reported wanting to help young people; second, they decided to teach for the economic reason of needing employment; and third, they said they wished to help their communities and contribute to society (Lewis, 2006). Importantly, this research indicated that African American male teachers desire the ability to help students reach their educational goals and be productive members of society (Lewis, 2006). These findings are congruent with those of other researchers, who similarly found that teachers value being a part of their communities and serve to engage their students to make connections between their local, national, racial, and cultural identities (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

In direct contrast to the barriers to choosing education as a profession, researchers have highlighted many good reasons for Black males to choose teaching as their priority profession. Marvin Lynn is considered a leading researcher on Black male teachers. His research has emphasized that Black men view teaching as an opportunity to correct social, political, and even economic barriers that prohibit African Americans from success (Lynn, 2006). As such, African American male teachers tend to teach in ways that attempt to end racial inequality (Lynn, 2006). Using CRT to explore these narratives, Lynn stated that Black men can relate to Black students,

which provides practical and culturally relevant instruction in the classroom. To further Lynn's studies, Brown (2012) examined the perceptions of Black male teachers regarding their positions as role models, specifically for Black male students. Brown found that Black male teachers have distinct dispositions and experiences that allowed them to connect with troubled Black male students. Additionally, Black male teachers were used in policy and broader discussions to further African American views (Brown, 2012).

A qualitative study by Garibaldi (1991) found that Black male teachers viewed employer stability, work accessibility, and the chance to promote societal change (46%) as both appealing and satisfying. Further, their choices to instruct were affected more by their relatives (43%) than by experience with previous educators (Garibaldi, 1991). These findings are perhaps consistent with the notion that Black male teachers have little experience with having Black male teachers of their own. These statistics underscored that researchers' findings that Black males feel a "duty" to give back to those who desperately need their leadership. Among those individuals, statistics have shown that those same Black male teachers were influenced by family members as well as the experience of past teachers, both of which led them to become teachers.

Past Experiences That Influence Black Male Teachers

Black male teachers often choose to enter the profession because they had positive previous experiences with their Black male teachers (Fray & Gore, 2018). Similarly, their upbringing often influenced other Black male teachers to enter the profession (Fray & Gore, 2018). Many Black teachers, both male and female, have also reported that as students, they were inspired by Black teachers who served as their role models and now wanted to emulate them (Miller & Endo, 2005; Villegas et al., 2012). Similarly, many Black educators reported positive and negative motivating experiences for becoming teachers (Fray & Gore, 2018).

Notably, Black male educators have experience with being Black and male in the U.S. school system; as such, they can directly relate to the challenges experienced by their students. It appears that despite Caucasians perceiving the teaching profession as having relatively low status in their community, the African American male students consider teaching mainly because of the encouragement they received from high school teachers (Bianco et al., 2011). As such, according to researchers, Black teachers have better connectivity with Black students because of their cultural background and experiences. Therefore, Black teachers bring personal experience to teaching, with particular insight into racism and ethnocentrism in society (Villegas et al., 2012).

Stereotypes in Education

Stereotypes are generalized beliefs or expectations that shape the thought process of a category (Kanahara, 2006). Stereotypes in education can have negative ramifications because they can create an adverse environment for multiple stakeholder groups. The two prevailing stereotypes that have emerged in the scholarly literature are that education is a career for women and that Black male teachers face the stigma of being disciplinarians and surrogate father figures. These two stereotypes are now discussed in turn.

Stereotype: Education Is a Female-Dominated Profession

In the 2017-18 school year, the NCESs stated that 76% of K-12 teachers were women. Within this group of female teachers, approximately 79% of the teachers were White, and only 7% were Black (NCES, 2018). That percentage increased to 89% when analyzing elementary schools versus 65% of secondary schools (NCES, 2018). The stereotype that education is a career for women is derived from these prevailing data points. Additionally, a statement of education being a White female-dominated career path is accurate. However, the notion that education is solely a career for women suggests that men could not excel. In the present study, I

intended to show the precise need for Black male teachers and how they benefit education as a whole.

In a society where not only masculinity but, specifically, Black masculinity is still being pressured on children, we are faced with the understanding that education is a predominantly female career path. The educational field has been framed as an institution providing students with social and emotional leaders. It is assumed that women are more capable of providing the nurturing aspect of students' needs and, thus, are more capable educators. The gender distribution within the K-12 teaching profession has grown to a nationwide imbalance that sees approximately three out of four educators in public elementary and secondary schools as part of the female gender classification (NCES, 2018). Multiple researchers have found that women have dominated the teaching profession mainly because Black male teachers in primary education are often perceived as suspicious individuals who could harm young children (Bryan & Browder, 2013; Lynn, 2006).

Before the public school system was created in the United States, education was a career considered for intellectuals, which, at that time, was a way to discriminate by race and gender (King et al., 2012). The assumption at the time was that men were the only ones who could hold these positions. This thought process started to change in the early 19th century. Compared to present-day educational institutions, views have completely changed. Richard Ingersoll and colleagues (2016) stated that the nation had witnessed a slow but steady increase of K-12 educators who are women. This leads to the critical question of "Why?" Researchers Severiens and Ten Dam (2012) believed that the career choice between males and females is grounded in the options given and made in higher education. They argued that gender differences in educational careers might be explained, in part, by the differences in non-cognitive learner

characteristics, such as discipline, motivation, time management skills, and goals. This thought has led researchers to conclude that students' experiences in higher education dictate the development and career choices of individuals entering teaching. This theory was further developed and expounded upon by Severiens and Ten Dam, who stated that while males score lower on academic discipline and communication skills, women are more likely to pay attention in class, work with others, organize and keep track of homework, and seek help from others. This notion lends credence to the idea that the drive to pursue teaching as a profession is determined by an individual's experience in higher education.

Teaching is currently considered a low-status profession in the United States (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Profession status is often categorized by the starting salary and the potential to grow that salary over time. In a study conducted by Ingersoll et al. (2016), researchers summarized that teaching professionals are typically well compensated and provided with a high salary and benefits over a career span, given the amount of lengthy training and complexity of the knowledge and skills required to excel as a teacher. The day-to-day interactions between educators and students often highlight the complexity of the educational field and the importance of how teachers transfer their knowledge to students. However, in the teaching profession, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), the national mean of an elementary and middle school teacher is $63,830. Careers with lower wages are stereotypically categorized as careers for women. Hardie (2015) further concluded that the median income of occupation was negatively associated with aspirations toward female-dominated fields. Educational aspirations, holding conservative gender role attitudes, and being Black were related to the percentage of female job incumbents but not to the likelihood of aspiring to a female-dominated occupation (Hardie, 2015). These data showed that in practice, males shy away from career paths such as

education because of the assumption that the individual career choice will garner a lesser salary from the association of being a female-dominated career path.

Farinde et al. (2016) examined the lack of representation of Black teachers in the public school system. They found an inherent value in placing Black teachers in educational settings where Black students were present. Farinde et al. conducted a qualitative study interviewing 12 Black female teachers for their intentions to remain within the teaching profession; the researchers were able to summarize, based on their findings, three themes. First, the decision to leave the teaching profession was often driven by dissatisfaction with work conditions (Farinde et al., 2016). Second, the study subjects noted that their compensation was not commensurate with the expectations of the role. In this regard, salary levels remained stagnant as the demands on a teacher's time, dedication, and workload continued to grow. Finally, the subjects expressed concern that their personal goals were not aligned with their professional goals because opportunities for advancement were limited (Farinde et al., 2016).

These thoughts are essential as they mirror the same ideas and research from Black male teachers who participated in other qualitative studies. Further, while there are some presumed stereotypes, one can infer that both Black male teachers and Black female teachers have the same thoughts and concerns about the education industry, even though Black female teachers are more represented than Black male teachers in the United States. In summary, the stereotype of education as a female-dominated profession does, indeed, influence Black males who are interested in becoming teachers.

Stereotype: Black Male Teachers Are Disciplinarians and Father Figures

For Black male teachers, studies have shown that Black men face the stereotype of being an "Angry Black Male" (Bristol & Goings, 2019). For Black professional men, experiences with

gendered racism also took the form of encounters with controlling images and archetypes, such as that of the "Angry Black Man." These controlling images structure how Black professionals, both men and women, respond to encounters they deal with daily (Wingfield, 2007).

Having an authoritative figure who is a Black man is a presence that many young Black males will never have the chance to experience in the classroom (Brockenbrough, 2015). Notably, many young Black male students do not have a Black male authority figure in the household. Prior analysts have contended that many African American children often do not have male role models because many African American men take their obligation to provide for their families seriously, constantly working long hours away from the household (Brown, 2012). The same study found that Black men had insufficient exposure to Black men and other familial authority figures (Brown, 2012). Notably, Black families in single-parent households living without a father figure were shown to have a direct correlation to poverty in the community and academic underachievement (Brown, 2012).

The role of the Black male teacher is predetermined before he enters the classroom. According to researchers, the trajectory of Black male teachers in the educational system has been put in the context of securing, administering, and governing Black male students (Brown, 2012). The premise of the Black male teacher as the entity to control Black male students is derived from the thought that Black men have the physical presence to control Black male students. In 2012, Brown argued that Black male teachers are expected to be physically intimidating and capable of using their physical presence to control Black male students. Another stereotype encountered in the education system is that Black male students are believed to be aggressive and violent. Black male teachers are generally expected to play a traditional role for these students (Brown, 2012). The present image often in the mind of administrators when

searching for Black male teachers is to put them in schools with struggling disciplinary issues. Hence, they take the role of stern, authoritative figures who are expected to exhibit their dominant masculinity to the Black students (Brockenbrough, 2015). The implicit belief is that Black male teachers have the rugged persona needed to control Black male students. This thought only furthers the racial and gender stereotypes that do not affect their White counterparts (Brown, 2012).

Black male teachers have often been considered surrogate father figures in students' lives. Brockenbrough's (2015) research concluded that educational entities often see Black male teachers as filling the role of other fathers, similar to why Black women choose to teach due to their connection to their non-biological mothers who had an extreme impact on their decisions. However, Brockenbrough's studies also showed that Black male teachers often fight against that distinction because of personal anxieties. Brockenbrough (2018) found that Black male teachers were ambivalent towards the extra pedagogical responsibilities associated with that role, coupled with the students' resistance to receiving a father figure who was not their biological father. The thought that being a surrogate father is not the responsibility of Black male teachers was prevalent in Brockenbrough's research; notably, this perspective is in direct opposition to research demonstrating that African American women choose to teach because of their maternal connection to their students. This thought process could also highlight why women dominate the field of education.

In an interview during Brockenbrough's research, a subject emphasized that female teachers do not have as difficult a time as Black male teachers due to the constant presence of a female figure in a student's life. Black students' familiarity with female authority figures in their families, coupled with their resentment of their father figures—or the lack thereof, has produced

resistance to the Black male educator in the classroom (Brockenbrough, 2018). Through the conclusion of his studies, Brockenbrough found that the participants acknowledged how their students' psychological and emotional well-being was further complicated when race and culture were additional factors. This extra responsibility could contribute to Black male teachers' distance between themselves and their students. Further studies are necessary to further this discussion, as the details of Black male teachers who cannot or choose not to assume the role of father figure for students are presently unknown. It is also unclear whether school administrators have negative views of Black male teachers who do not take on the persona of father figures.

Black Male Teachers' Effect on Students

Researcher Richard Milner presented five tenets of leadership that any individual teaching Black male students should follow. The empowering principles are as follows:

1. teachers and students envision life beyond their present situation;
2. teachers and students come to know themselves concerning others;
3. teachers and students speak of possibility and not about negative influences;
4. teachers and students care and demonstrate that they care; and
5. teachers and students change their thinking to change their actions. (Milner, 2007a, 2007b)

Under these principles, it is easy to understand why Black male teachers lead the charge to provide a balance for Black male students.

In 1995, J. W. Osborne performed a mixed-methods study in which he compared the academic achievement levels of students of various races in correlation to their self-esteem. African American male students had a significant decrease in their academic achievement from eighth to tenth grade, which was correlated with a reduction in self-esteem (Osborne, 1995). This

study illustrated the growing need to invest in the education of African American students. Studies supported that Black representation in the teaching force improves the educational experience and academic achievement among Black students. Black male teachers are positioned to offer cultural awareness and relatability to the needs of Black students. The presence of Black educators in the classroom creates an opportunity for students to feel safe within the academic environment. This safety net would be considered a nurturing role as a father figure. Black male teachers are critical in serving as father figures in teaching positions and improving overall academic outcomes (Brockenbrough, 2014).

In 2016, Cherng and Halpin observed that when students had educators of the same race, students revealed more grounded sensations of being focused when doing their homework and felt more particular about their instructors' capacities to speak with them. These students additionally detailed investing more energy in school and increasing the desire to perform well. By contrast, when students had educators of a different race than themselves, the research found that students experienced lower levels of these sentiments and mentalities. These patterns were generally apparent in Black students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016).

Summary

Chapter 2 focused on seminal literature surrounding the presence of Black male teachers in the K-12 education system. The chapter began with an introduction highlighting the disparity in the number of Black male educators compared to other teacher demographics. The chapter next included a discussion of critical race theory and the theoretical framework utilized in the present study. Next, the chapter examined the motivations of different teacher demographic groups for pursuing teaching as a profession; this discussion highlighted the notion that Black female teachers feel a maternal calling to provide for students, which leads them to the teaching

profession. The reasons and motivations for White men to enter the teaching profession were discussed similarly. The literature suggested that White men have lower barriers to entry to the teaching profession than other demographic groups and that White men statistically have the highest salaries of any other demographic group of teachers. Chapter 2 then discussed the barriers and opportunities for Black male teachers in teaching. Some of these barriers included low economic compensation and stereotypes in the classroom. Options included the possibility of making a positive difference in students' lives. Finally, the chapter examined common stereotypes Black male teachers encounter in the K-12 educational system. Next, in Chapter 3, a detailed description of the methodology utilized in the present study is described.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

The steadily rising number of Black male K-12 teachers exiting the teaching profession has brought about major concerns. This qualitative descriptive study explored the perceptions and experiences of Black male teachers in the K-12 education system and how these perceptions and experiences contributed to their decision to continue in the field of education. This qualitative descriptive study aimed to identify and determine the leading causes of Black males' decision to stay in the educational area. The general problem of Black male K-12 educators being underrepresented in the United States is well-documented and has been analyzed by various researchers (Egalite et al., 2015). This specific problem underscores the need for this study, which highlights how Black male educators perceive their influences on the school community, given there are so few of them. The purpose of this qualitative study, then, was to gain a clearer understanding of Black male educators' experiences concerning the underrepresentation of Black males in school districts in New Jersey and what has promoted their persistence in education, despite the lack of representation.

In Chapter 3, I describe the specific methodologies employed in this research study. First, the chapter begins with a description of the qualitative approach undertaken in the study, as well as a rationale for choosing a qualitative methodology. The chapter next describes the study research design and the rationale for its selection. The participant selection criteria, sampling procedures, and data collection and analysis techniques are also provided. Finally, ethical considerations and methods to ensure the study's trustworthiness are included.

Research Design and Rationale

This qualitative study aimed to understand Black male educators' experiences concerning the underrepresentation of Black males in school districts in New Jersey and what has promoted

their decisions to remain in the education profession, despite the lack of representation. The following research and sub-research questions aligned and guided this study by providing in-depth descriptions of Black male K-12 teachers and their reasons for remaining in the field of education:

RQ: What are the leading causes of Black males' decision to stay in the educational field in New Jersey?

SRQ1: What factors influence Black men to choose teaching as a profession?

SRQ1a: What are the perceived barriers of entry for Black male teachers?

SRQ1b: What are the perceived opportunities of access for Black male teachers?

SRQ2: How have Black male teachers' K-12 experiences informed their decisions to stay in education as a career path?

SRQ2a: Do race and gender influence the Black male teachers' perspectives on the teaching profession?

I utilized a qualitative methodology in the present study to gain first-hand information about the research problem from the perspectives and lived experiences of the participants. Qualitative research studies are naturalistic and inductive and aim to answer questions about people's lives, lived experiences, emotions, behaviors, perceptions, feelings, and the widespread phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Notably, qualitative methodology has several characteristics: it is interpretive, experiential, and situational (Stake, 2010). Researchers choose qualitative studies when researchers do not know or have partial or incomplete knowledge regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Levitt et al., 2018). In addition, according to Yin (2013), qualitative research examines how people perceive their social conduct in the context of a phenomenon and real-world events. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) and Butina

(2015) supported this assertion, adding that qualitative research techniques are most effective when a researcher wishes to comprehend the "why" and "how" a person behaves in social interactions with others in a group environment; as a narrative, it offers in-depth information. Since the problem I sought to address is little understood regarding the reasons why Black male educators choose to remain in the teaching profession, a qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate for this study.

Quantitative and mixed methodologies were not chosen for this research study. Quantitative methods involve formal, objective, deductive, and systematic strategies for generating and refining knowledge for problem solving. Unlike qualitative-based methods, quantitative methodologies aim to answer questions regarding how many, how much, and to what extent a phenomenon occurs in a population or subpopulation (Mohajan, 2020). Since the research questions involve descriptions of phenomena from Black male educators rather than statistics surrounding the prevalence of Black male teachers, I did not select a quantitative methodology. Similarly, a mixed-methods approach, which combines elements from quantitative and qualitative methodologies, was not chosen due to the lack of a quantitative component in the research questions. Therefore, I utilized a qualitative descriptive study because it would give a detailed account of the problems and trends in the participants' social phenomena in their communities and organizations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2017). Specifically, the chosen qualitative research methodology would allow for a deep understanding of the perceptions of Black male educators regarding their decisions to remain in the field of education.

Within the qualitative methodology, I chose a qualitative descriptive research design. The qualitative descriptive approach is one of the six most-used qualitative research approaches to explore people's knowledge in making meaning of experiences and phenomena (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015). The overarching goal of qualitative descriptive studies is to reveal and decipher the meanings of experiences that people construct. Importantly, this qualitative research examines existing phenomena and interrogates the underlying meanings and context. The qualitative descriptive design poses questions such as why and how and provides context and deeper understanding of why a phenomenon exists (Cypress, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) asserted that primary or generic qualitative design is used in various fields such as education, social work, and counseling. Furthermore, they indicated that general qualitative research design involves an in-depth description and detailed picture of the phenomena. As a researcher using this approach, I was interested in how the participants in my study interpreted their experiences and constructed and described their worlds. What meaning did they ascribe to their experiences? The qualitative descriptive research design was suitable and appropriate for the present study.

To understand and explain the phenomenon behind the experiences of Black male educators in K-12 classrooms and their reasons for remaining in the teaching profession, I collected descriptions and depictions from participants as sources of data through the use of thorough interviews to better understand the situation being studied. Other qualitative designs, such as narrative, grounded theory, and case study, were not considered appropriate for this study. The primary focus of a narrative method is on data obtained from people who provide personal information about their own lives (Mihas, 2019). A study by Glaser and Strauss (2017) proposed that grounded theory is inappropriate for a descriptive analysis of the phenomenon. Other designs, such as case studies, explore little concerns and problems and do not allow for the perspectives of many to be examined (Merriam, 2009); as such, a case study or multiple case study was not chosen for the present research study. I decided on a general qualitative inquiry because it was the most suitable research design for the study's purposes.

Role of the Researcher

The integrity of qualitative research depends on the skills, competence, and thoroughness of the individual conducting the investigation. In the present qualitative research study, I as the researcher was the human instrument, collecting human data and acting as an objective viewer (Wa-Mbaleka, 2018). I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with participants who were eligible to participate in the study. When working with human subjects, researchers must follow ethical norms by guaranteeing pseudonymity, voluntary participation, and a thorough knowledge of the requirements of the study (Moustakas, 1994). As the sole research instrument, I selected participants who met the participant criteria; conducted semi-structured interviews; ensured the protection of participants' data; assured that participants did not influence data collection; limited any researcher bias; interpreted the responses of participants, minimizing any bias or predetermined viewpoints; analyzed the interview data using NVivo version 12, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software; and made suppositions grounded on the emerging themes from the data within the context of the theoretical framework chosen for the study.

I purposefully selected 13 Black male educators who worked in the K-12 public school education system. It must be disclosed that I am employed by the K-12 education system in New Jersey, the setting from which the participants were selected. As such, I had professional knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation in the research study, but only as an outside observer of Black male educators, given that I work as an Assistant School Business Administrator for an education district in New Jersey. To reduce the possibility of researcher bias, I did not select Black male educators who worked directly with me. Consequently, I did not encounter any situation in which a participant was my subordinate or superior. In addition, I have

professional, but not personal, acquaintances with Black male educators from other school districts who met the inclusion criteria for the study. I did not consider these individuals for participation in the study.

I engaged in reflexivity practices throughout the study to mitigate potential researcher bias. Reflexivity involves a researcher thinking critically about how their values, opinions, thoughts, beliefs, and worldviews influence each facet of the research process, including decision making, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation (Olaghere, 2022). I utilized journaling and memoing techniques to maintain complete awareness of my thoughts, opinions, and beliefs throughout the research process (McGrath, 2021). To this end, I journaled before and after engaging in any research-based activity, including participant selection, interview protocol development, data collection via semi-structured interviews, and data analysis. Similarly, memos were utilized throughout the data collection and analysis process. In addition, I took detailed field notes during the interviews to document my thoughts, opinions, and beliefs regarding the participants' interviews (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018). In summary, I utilized journaling, field notes, and memos as reflexivity protocols to mitigate researcher bias.

Methodology

The methodology section explains the details of how data were collected from the participants in the study. The participant selection criteria, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, as well as procedures for data collection and data analysis comprise the methodology section.

Participant Selection Criteria

According to Singh and Masuku (2014), a research sample is a collection of individuals selected randomly from a population to determine the traits of the overall population; hence, in

this investigation, I used purposeful sampling. The general population of the study was Black male educators in the United States. By contrast, the target population was Black male educators in public school districts in New Jersey. The sample consisted of 13 educators who met the following inclusion criteria:

1. Participants must be African American males.
2. Participants must be New Jersey state-certified teachers in the K-12 education system.
3. Participants must be employed in the New Jersey public school system instead of private schools.
4. Participants must have at least 2 years of experience as a K-12 teacher.

The inclusion criteria did not include a provision for age, as teachers from all age groups were eligible to participate in the study if they met the inclusion criteria. According to Hennink and Kaiser (2022), data saturation is the term used to describe the data collection stage when no new issues or insights are discovered and data begin to repeat, resulting in repetitive data collection and sufficient sample size. To ensure content validity, saturation is a vital sign that a sample is adequate for the issue under investigation and the data acquired accurately reflect the range, importance, and complexity of the problems under investigation (Francis et al., 2010; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The sample size of 13 participants was selected because this sample size generally ensures that data saturation is reached in qualitative descriptive studies (Guest et al., 2020; Vasileiou et al., 2018). Specifically, Guest et al. (2020) demonstrated that a sample size of 12 participants leads to data saturation in 98% of interview-based qualitative studies. Accordingly, I observed that data saturation was achieved after conducting 10 interviews.

I utilized purposeful sampling as the primary method to select participants who met the study's inclusion criteria. As Palinkas et al. (2016) proposed, in qualitative research, purposeful

sampling is frequently used to find and choose information-rich samples relevant to the study's topic. Purposeful sampling is a strategy that deliberately selects specific individuals, events, and settings due to the crucial and essential information that can help understand the research problem (Yin, 2013). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explained that purposeful sampling entails identifying and choosing people or groups with extensive expertise or experience in a particular field. In this study, I used purposeful sampling to select participants who understood the phenomenon under analysis, namely why Black male educators chose to remain in the teaching profession. Participants, while not experts, were able to speak from a personal perspective related to the study. Participants talked about their direct knowledge, interactions within the public school system, and teaching experiences.

Instrumentation

The data collection involved two qualitative instruments. The first was a purposeful sampling questionnaire which I designed to gauge participant eligibility through demographic data collection. This instrument allowed me to recruit Black male educators who fit this study's requirements and gain more information about the participants' backgrounds. This step was completed first to ensure participants met the inclusion criteria and gather other relevant demographic data, which was essential for interpreting study results (Allan, 2020).

The second instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview comprised of critical questions about the participants' thoughts regarding why they continued to pursue a career in education. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), this encouraged responses from participants discussing their experiences and persistence in the field of education. Researchers utilize this technique to speak with knowledgeable or experienced people. While semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for the research, the open-ended interview questions

provided an ordered and logical manner to conduct an interview and directed the discussion toward data that helped answer the research questions (Appendix A). I developed the interview protocol and based the questions on the study purpose and problem statement (Appendix A).

Some demographic questions were included in the interview for two reasons. First, these questions were utilized as a method of triangulation based on responses to demographic surveys. Second, these demographic questions were included to help me get to know the participants, establish a rapport with them, and explore and respond to the study objectives within the context of the participants' views, thoughts, and emerging themes. Importantly, I ensured that the open-ended questions in the interview protocol were designed so that the participants' answers to the questions provided rich, deep information about the phenomenon of persistence in education.

Data Collection Procedures

Participants were recruited via my professional network. A recruitment email and flyer were included in this initial recruitment stage. Specifically, I emailed professional contacts in the New Jersey education system to inquire whether they knew individuals who met the inclusion criteria. If candidates met the inclusion criteria and indicated an interest in participating in the study, I informed them by email that they were selected for the interviews. After identifying the participants, I gave each selected participant an overview of this study, including a summary of the expectations of their participation. Following that, I provided and reviewed an informed consent form with each participant, as is customary (Geier et al., 2021). This allowed me to acknowledge and confirm the willingness of each participant to participate in the research. Informed consent forms were required before the scheduling of interviews. The signed consent form ensured the voluntary participation of the participants. Further, participants were notified

that they could remove themselves from the study without penalty if they felt uncomfortable with the methods used in this study.

One-on-one interviews were conducted via Zoom to ensure the safety of participants and myself amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This data collection method was the most appropriate as it allowed for direct engagement with Black male educators regarding their reasons for continuing their careers in education (Billups, 2019). I utilized email to schedule the planned interviews for the participants at a date and time that was mutually convenient for them and for myself. I conducted the interview sessions and was responsible for asking open-ended questions, moderating the sessions, and seeking clarification for any parts of the interview that might be misunderstood. Using open-ended questions ensured I could consider the views, attitudes, barriers, and experiences related to Black male educators and their reasons for remaining in the education field (McGrath, 2021).

Audio recordings of the interviews were taken with the consent of the participants. The audio recordings, in turn, were utilized to transcribe the data collected in this study. The duration of each interview was between 45-60 minutes to allow each participant to expand on his ideas; during the interview, I utilized journaling to ensure reflexivity and took field notes to capture essential impressions or changes in tone. I manually transcribed the interview line by line to confirm the transcriptions' validity and accuracy. The transcriptions were performed using Microsoft Word. To ensure accuracy, all interviews were transcribed within 72 hours to ensure my familiarity with the responses. The interview transcripts were sent to the participants for member-checking to ensure their accuracy, and any requested changes were made to ensure that the participants' intentions were accurately captured (Candela, 2019).

Once the interview sessions were complete and the interview transcriptions were member-checked by the participants, I saved each audio recording and transcript. The audio files from the interviews were saved with pseudonyms P1, P2, …, and P12 to ensure anonymity and confidentiality and to safeguard the participants' personal information (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). Data collection was considered complete after all interview transcripts were member-checked by the participants and assigned an appropriate pseudonym.

Data Analysis Procedures

Content analysis was used to analyze the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews because it is a common form of analysis for large amounts of verbal data (Lindgren et al., 2020). According to Elliott (2018), a researcher must examine the data, identify themes, categorize themes, and perform the final data analysis to form a cohesive data-based argument. Data analysis is a methodical approach to working with obtained data, structuring it, and placing it in manageable pieces that can be analyzed to identify themes (Raskind et al., 2019). The primary goal of the data analysis process is to organize data, look for patterns, and uncover themes to determine important information related to the research problem and questions while combining the results in a way that allows the researcher to make conclusions (Raskind et al., 2019).

Content analysis was used to find cohesive instances, essential themes, and patterns in the data acquired from the interviews. Unlike quantitative research, the research focuses on allowing deeper connections when investigating the retention of Black male educators in the K-12 education system. According to Blanco and Rossman (2021), the data analytic process is comprised of seven phases, including (a) organizing the data; (b) immersing the researcher in the data; (c) generating ideas for case summaries and possible themes; (d) coding the data; (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos and connecting the data to previous literature

and the theoretical framework chosen for the study; (f) searching for alternative understandings of the data; and (g) writing the formal presentation of the study. I employed each of these steps in the study.

I analyzed the data and looked for the participants' broad themes and significant ideas. To aid in the data analysis and thematic coding process, I utilized NVivo Version 12. All information was coded and synthesized with the appropriate data analysis process, as described in Merriam and Tisdell (2015). Moreover, as Creswell (2013) stated, "The process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information" (p. 184). I conducted the coding process to interpret data in smaller descriptive units. Coding captures significant ideas surrounding the data without losing meaning (Saldaña, 2021). The next step in the data analysis process was to develop constructs or categories. This process was done by addressing the research question and sub-research questions using the following method: code, sort, synthesize, and theorize. Given that I had an epistemological research question to understand the phenomenon of Black male educator retention in the education system, my initial coding methods included descriptive, narrative, and theming techniques, as Saldaña (2021) suggested.

A list of initial codes was compiled and grouped through developed anchor codes that included tallying frequency and generating categories that addressed the research questions, again following the models of Creswell (2013) and Saldaña (2021). I sorted the data collected by determining if a group of codes referred to a specific research question, sub-research question, or theme, how many times a particular code was attached to portions of the data, and if there were underlying meanings of the codes. During the second coding stage, as per Creswell (2013), I

utilized a combination of pattern, axial, and focused coding techniques to identify the themes further. I also used CRT tenets to group the participants' responses into themes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the appropriateness of the tools, techniques, and data must be addressed. Additionally, the researcher must evaluate the consistency and repeatability of the design, the suitability of the population selection and data collection techniques, and the consistency of the data analysis procedures and research questions (Johnson et al., 2019; Nowell et al., 2017). According to Connelly (2016), the trustworthiness of a study is defined as the level of confidence the researcher has in the data, transcription, and methods employed to ensure the quality of the research work. The four main elements—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—intersect to provide trust in qualitative research. The four aspects of trustworthiness are addressed in this section.

Credibility

A study is said to be credible when it accurately captures the perspectives of its participants. According to Morse (2015), the term *credibility* is similar to internal validity and refers to a person's views in a qualitative investigation. Participants can trust published research findings because they believe them to be their own. Therefore, this study can be regarded as credible because the participants answered honestly, and the recordings were not altered to ensure they reflected the participants' experiences (Cilesiz, 2011). One major factor that can mitigate threats to credibility is the study design. I chose the qualitative descriptive design because it presents the participants' viewpoints, ensuring that my beliefs would not overpower their perceptions. Credibility was also provided by using verbatim quotations from the participants in reporting themes and subthemes (Daniel, 2019). I also addressed credibility

through memoing and journaling to ensure and understand my reflexivity and the use of verbatim quotations from the participants.

Member checking was another method I used to address the study's credibility (Johnson et al., 2019). Member checking was the primary method of verifying the credibility of an investigation since, in qualitative research, the participants are the best judge of their own experiences. As described in the data collection procedures section, member checking involves sending the participants a copy of their interview transcript before data analysis to ensure that it accurately reflects the research subjects' attitudes, perceptions, and views (Candela, 2019; Johnson et al., 2019).

Transferability

According to Tong et al. (2012), the application of a study's findings to different people or places addresses the term *transferability* in qualitative research. This qualitative generalizability measure is used to assess external validity (Carmanti, 2018). Transferability looks to answer the questions surrounding the extent to which the study results can be generalized or applied to other groups, contexts, or settings (Lindgren et al., 2020). Transferability in qualitative studies ensures that the theoretical knowledge obtained from the research can be applied to other locations as well as to the general population under review. Creswell and Poth (2016) noted that the transferability of a research study can be ensured by providing enough details on the procedures used to carry out the study. Hence, I offered a concise and detailed description of the methods and the processes used to derive conclusions from the research data. The study also utilized sampling sufficiency and thick description to enhance transferability (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Sampling sufficiency is how a descriptive qualitative survey contains the appropriate sample size representing the phenomenon and

population. A thick description lets the consumer of the information comprehend the study's phenomenon and compare it to other circumstances (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Dependability is a critical component of trustworthiness and the validity of the data in the research. Dependability focuses on the results' consistency or congruency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The role of dependability is to give a framework in which the researcher checks the analysis process to ensure it is aligned with the standards for the designated design (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Although dependability in a qualitative study is challenging, the researcher should make every effort to present information to allow future investigators to repeat the study (Shenton, 2004). Forrero et al. (2018) discussed how studies with well-documented and reliable research methods are considered dependable. Dependability can be ensured by creating an audit trail that documents the process and decisions taken in the research where future researchers may replicate the same study and derive similar conclusions (Nowell et al., 2017). Therefore, to ensure that the study findings have dependability, I created an audit trail at each step of the research process to ensure that details were not neglected or missed in the data collection or analysis processes.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the capacity of others to confirm or verify findings in a research project (Elo et al., 2014). According to Singh et al. (2021), this guarantees that the researcher's biases will not impact the findings. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) highlighted that the research can be enhanced by developing confirmability by:

1. supplying a large number of evidence to support claims;

2. ensuring the accuracy of the results by providing a detailed description of the methodology;
3. acknowledging and declaring the researcher's preconceptions and positionality; and
4. giving appropriate weight to participants' experiences and perceptions rather than those of the researcher.

These recommendations were utilized in the present study, thereby lending confirmability to the study.

Assumptions

I brought two assumptions to this study. The first assumption was that the participants would be honest and open when answering the semi-structured interview questions and completing the demographic questionnaire. I had no reason to doubt this assumption because the participation required for the study was purely voluntary. The second assumption was that the interview questions were straightforward to understand. This assumption was valid because each participant answered the questions without hesitation.

Ethical Procedures

Research can present risks to the participants. As such, the researcher must ensure that the well-being of the participants is maintained throughout the research duration (Connelly, 2016). Adhering to set ethical standards throughout the process ensures the well-being of the subjects. These standards were clearly outlined in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). They included respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. I adhered to these three ethical standards throughout the entirety of the study. Respect for persons involves recognizing the autonomy of the research participants; this was demonstrated by providing all participants with information

about the research study, which augmented their informed consent. I also gave the participants informed consent forms with information about the study that also ensured their voluntary participation. Respect for beneficence concerns the risks and benefits of the research; the report stated that the participants who bear the most significant risk should directly benefit from the analysis (Arifin, 2018). Beneficence was ensured by informing all participants of the risks and benefits involved in the study. Respect for justice is concerned with ensuring that the procedures applied in the study are fair and that all the participants have an equal chance to participate (Beauchamp, 2008). All participants were given an equal opportunity to participate in the study and an equal chance to provide their views, perceptions, and attitudes in the semi-structured open-ended interview process.

Clearance from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought to ensure that I had the necessary authorization to conduct the research. Under FDA regulations, IRB approval is required for all research studies involving human subjects. The IRB can approve, request modifications, or disapprove research requests if they do not meet the necessary thresholds (Osborne & Luoma, 2018). I ensured that all requirements for approval were met before requesting permission.

The participants were provided with informed consent forms and formal invitation letters that served to make their participation in the study official. The informed consent forms offered information on the nature of the study and my plans to maintain anonymity and confidentiality for the participants. All the participants were informed that if they felt uncomfortable with the research, they were permitted to terminate their participation in the research study without penalty or fear of repercussion. The participants were notified of the potential risks and benefits gained by participating in the study after completing the study. According to Creswell and Poth

(2016), researchers should inform participants of the potential risks involved in the study and potential benefits arising after the research study's completion. The study did not reveal the schools in which the participants were employed to preserve anonymity, and a pseudonym referred to each participant in all files derived from the study. All participants were informed of the mechanisms that I used to preserve their anonymity and protect their confidentiality.

All the data gathered during the collection process remained confidential. I will responsibly store all the data and keep the data safe for 3 years until the research study is published (Hurst et al., 2020). I will also store informed consent forms for future use in case conflict arises from the study. Records will be kept following the state and federal statutes governing research procedures. Once the study is published, the documents will be disposed of safely to ensure the confidentiality of the study.

Limitations

A possible limitation of this study may be research bias, as I am a Black male currently working in the education system in New Jersey. As a current administrator and a Black male, I was fully aware of the possibility of researcher bias, given the topic of the study. The study may be perceived as biased or skewed due to my vested interests in the Black community, in general, and the overall recruitment and retention of Black male teachers. Since I see the world through the lens of a Black male as well as the lens of an educator, I took extra care to remain faithful to the interview and IRB protocols and engaged in stringent member checking to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the study. While this can be a contributing bias, I have never been a teacher, despite currently working within the administration of a school district. As described in the data collection section, I engaged in various reflexivity protocols to mitigate researcher bias.

Summary

This research study aimed to study why Black male educators choose to remain in the education profession. Chapter 3 offered an overview of the data collection procedures for the research and laid the groundwork for the results presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 3 began with an introduction to the need for the present study by recapping the problem addressed by the study as well as its purpose. Next, the chapter reviewed the study's research questions and discussed the qualitative research methodology chosen for the study. I explained why a qualitative method was deemed appropriate for the study because it permits a greater understanding of the participants' perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs regarding their decision to remain in the education profession. I also explained why quantitative and mixed methodologies were not chosen for the study. Next, I discussed my choice of a qualitative descriptive study as the most suitable research design. I also reviewed the inclusion criteria I used to select participants and ensure their eligibility for the study. Next, I described my role as the researcher, my positionality, and the reflexivity protocols I followed to mitigate researcher bias. Finally, I reviewed issues of trustworthiness by discussing procedures to ensure the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and addressed ethical considerations and steps to protect the participants' confidentiality. Next, Chapter 4 examines the study's results as generated from the semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the participants.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Black male teachers have been underrepresented in K-12 educational classrooms (Vilson, 2015; Waite et al., 2018). Male teachers, in general, are uncommon, but African American male teachers and male teachers of other minority groups are even less common (Chmelynski, 2006). Of more than 3.2 million public school K-12 teachers nationwide, only 2% are Black males (USDOE, 2021). Importantly, theorists have concluded that Black educators, specifically Black male educators, have a positive impact on children of all races and genders and the teaching profession as a whole (Green & Martin, 2018). Yet, Black men are still not choosing to enter the teaching profession. Rather than approach this problem by interviewing Black male teachers who decided to leave the profession, I as the researcher took the opposite approach and examined the perspectives of Black men who made the conscious choice to stay in the field of education.

This interpretive phenomenological qualitative research study aimed to understand better the Black male educator experience concerning the underrepresentation of Black male K-12 teachers in New Jersey school districts. Additionally, this study will help better understand African American male high school students' college choice decisions and why Black male students are eliminating the option of becoming teachers at this stage. To this end, I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews to answer the following research question:

RQ: What are the leading causes of Black males' decision to stay in the educational field in New Jersey?

The sub-research questions included the following:

SRQ1: What factors influence Black men to choose teaching as a profession?

SRQ1a: What are the perceived barriers of entry for Black male teachers?

SRQ1b: What are the perceived opportunities of access for Black male teachers?

SRQ2: How have Black male teachers' K-12 experiences informed their decisions to stay in education as a career path?

SRQ2a: Do race and gender influence the Black male teachers' perspectives on the teaching profession?

Chapter 4 first presents the procedures followed for data collection, data analysis, and the specific research protocol. It then reviews the context of the phenomenon under study, namely the perspectives and experiences of African American male teachers who chose to stay in the K-12 education field in New Jersey. Chapter 4 then described the interviewed participants, including demographic data relevant to the study. Next is a discussion of the interview setting, the nature of the semi-structured interviews, and data saturation. After these preliminaries, the results of this study are presented, including essential quotes from the participants. Lastly, there is a summary and transition to Chapter 5, which discusses the conclusions and implications of this study.

Data Collection

The data sources for this research study included a demographic survey and an interview protocol with semi-structured, open-ended interview questions designed to obtain answers to the research questions (Appendix A). These semi-structured, open-ended interviews, which were approximately 60 minutes in length, were conducted via GoToMeeting and Zoom video conferencing with 13 participants who were prescreened and found to meet the inclusion criteria. Establishing district permission was not required because I solicited participants through their emails. I sent out email invitations, introducing myself and explaining the study. I received replies from over 20 individuals who stated they were interested in the study. The first 13 Black

male teachers who met the qualifications and returned the signed consent letter were selected to participate. The solicitation was sent out after I received IRB approval. The solicitation emails were sent out until the saturation level of 13 Black male public school teachers was achieved. After recruitment and scheduling, the research officially began.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted via GoToMeeting and Zoom, online conferencing services for hosting meetings and teleconference calls, due to current social distancing guidelines and restrictions in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I conducted the interviews from my home office at a day and time chosen by each participant. Before and after each interview, I reiterated the study's purpose and procedures. The participants were assigned pseudonyms, such as P1, P2, …, and P13, to protect their identity and ensure anonymity. I researcher used the video and audio capabilities of the GoToMeeting and Zoom conferencing software to record both video and audio. I then transcribed the interviews by hand into Microsoft World using a standardized font: Time New Roman 12. The verbatim transcribed data were uploaded to NVivo software for analysis and coded by themes to determine the similarity, dissimilarity, or collaboration of the participants' responses. The timestamp of each statement by both researcher and participant was added to each interview transcript in case I needed to return to the recordings and relisten to particular sections. Interview transcripts were sent to each participant for member checking to ensure the interview's accuracy and the participant's intentions (Guest et al., 2020).

Research Protocol

The research protocol for data analysis was conducted as described in Chapter 3. The data analysis procedures followed the following steps. First, I did four critical readings of each

interview transcript. In the first reading, I read the interview transcript for overall impressions. In the second reading, I read each interview transcript line-by-line to become familiar with all of the data. Third, I read the interview transcripts by interview question instead of by participant. This allowed me to identify essential themes from each interview question. It also gave me insights into which interview questions the participants "grouped" into common themes. Lastly, on the fourth reading, I reread the interview transcripts for the participants to regain a holistic appreciation of the entire data set.

Next, I reviewed the interview transcripts to determine if the data correlated to the research question. Consistent with the field tests, each participant answered all interview questions directly, and there was no need to eliminate any data. A code-subcode hierarchical coding system was utilized to code the data. I used each sub-research question as a theme, which became the main code. The themes identified were: (a) the perceived barriers to entry for Black male teachers, (b) the perceived opportunities for Black male teachers when entering the education profession, (c) factors that influence Black men to choose teaching as a profession, (d) the influence of race and gender on Black male teachers' perspectives on being an educator, and (e) how Black male teachers' K-12 experiences informed their decision to stay in education. Within each theme, subcodes were given to the participants' ideas. The themes were chosen by research question and sub-research question. Theme 1 addresses SRQ1a, and Theme 2 addresses SRQ1b; these themes, together with Theme 3, address SRQ1. Themes 1 and 2 were largely distinct, but Themes 1 and 2 merged with Theme 3 to answer SRQ1. Similarly, Theme 4 addresses SRQ2a. Theme 4 overlaps with Theme 5, which together address SRQ2. These themes all address the research question and are synthesized at the end of this section.

After identifying themes and different ideas contributing to the development of each theme, direct quotations from participants were chosen to help explain the themes. If a variety of participants had similar responses within a theme, I ensured that the selected quotation was representative of the general sentiment of all participants not chosen for a quotation. In this study, there was little disagreement between participants in that many expressed the same or individualized thoughts that no other participant replicated. However, participants did offer contrasting positions on a few subthemes. Notably, any differential opinions and contrasts are noted in the data analysis section. I did not choose this type of data for the omission.

Lastly, after identifying themes, subthemes, and quotations, I did a fifth reading of the entire data set to ensure that all themes, subthemes, and quotes were chosen to be representative of the participants' intentions and perceptions.

Interview Participants

The general population of this study consisted of African American male teachers in the United States. The target population consisted of African American male K-12 teachers in New Jersey who have worked in the public education field for more than 2 years.

The population for this study was 13 Black male teachers teaching for 2 or more years in a New Jersey public school district. Purposive and criterion sampling was used to choose the participants. The purposive technique is used to carefully select subjects who can provide unique and rich data due to their experiences (Suen et al., 2014). According to Creswell (2013), purposeful sampling enables the researcher to select participants who know the purpose and understand the research questions. Below are the pre-qualifying inclusion criteria requirements that encouraged participation in the study:

1. Black male,
2. state-certified,
3. taught 2 or more years,
4. willing to take part in the interview, and
5. currently working in a public school district.

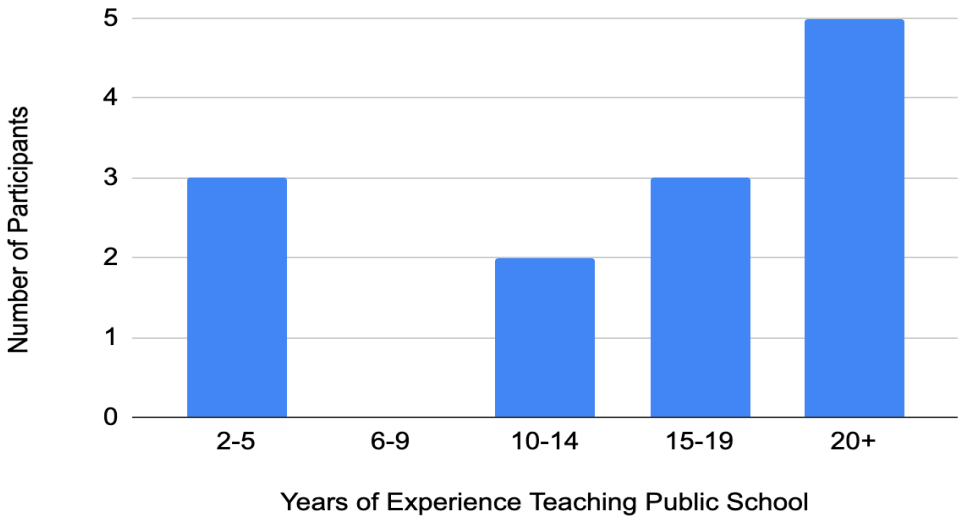
The sample size chosen was inclusive of a minimum of 12 participants. Creswell (2013) proposed that a sample size of at least 10, but no more than 60, is optimal for phenomenology studies to reach data saturation.

I contacted responding participants who met the inclusion criteria and asked them to sign and return the informed consent form via email to me. Once I received the participants' informed consent forms, I contacted each one to schedule an interview. Each semi-structured interview was conducted via GoToMeeting or Zoom and scheduled for 60 minutes for each participant.

Thirteen participants were chosen to participate in the study. Notably, the participants covered all levels of the K-12 education system. The population contained seven elementary school teachers who taught Grades 1-5 (P1, P2, P3, P4, P9, P11, and P12), two middle school teachers who taught Grades 6-8 (P10 and P13), three high school teachers who taught Grades 9-12 (P5, P6, and P8), and one teacher who led a unique education transition program for students aged 18-21 (P7). Participants were also asked how many years of experience they had as public school teachers. I categorized the participants into the following groups based on the length of time they worked in their field: (1) 2-5 years, (2) 6-9 years, (3) 10-14 years, (4) 15-19 years, and (5) greater than 20 years. The results of this analysis are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Participants' Years of Experience Teaching in Public Schools



I found that the mean number of experiences of the participants was 16.9 years, with a standard deviation of 8.5 years. The population has a significant standard deviation because the data were skewed right, with more than 60% of participants having more than 15 years of experience (Figure 1). While the data were skewed toward participants with greater than 15 years of experience, teachers with lower levels of expertise were also well represented, with 3 participants having 5 years of experience and 2 participants having 10-14 years of experience. I believe that the skewed nature of the data concerning higher numbers of years of experience was optimal for this research study, as the research question under investigation was why African American male teachers remain in the field of education. The participants chosen for this study have largely remained in the field of education for their entire careers, making the sample representative of the population under investigation.

The interviewed participants also covered all subject matters taught in K-12 classrooms. Four teachers were identified as mathematics or science teachers (P1, P5, P12, and P13). Four

participants were English or history teachers (P3, P6, P8, and P10), two of the teachers were general education teachers who taught all subjects (P9 and P11), and three teachers were special education specialists (P2, P4, and P7). The participants also widely represented school districts in New Jersey, with the participants representing six counties: Bergen (P1 and P13), Essex (P3, P4, P5, P6, and P10), Mercer (P2), Middlesex (P8 and P12), Passaic (P7), and Union (P9 and P11).

In summary, this section demonstrated that the interviewed participants were chosen from various school districts in New Jersey. The participants teach all primary subjects taught in the K-12 classrooms, including mathematics, science, English language arts, history, and special needs. Furthermore, the participants taught students at all levels of education: elementary school, middle, and high school, in general education and special education classrooms. Similarly, the participants had varying levels of experience ranging from 5 to over 33 years of experience, giving the study a profound level of transferability to the education population.

Interview Setting

Interviews took place in my home office on a day and time chosen by each participant. The semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted via Go to Meeting and Zoom, online conferencing services for hosting meetings and teleconference calls due to current social distancing guidelines and restrictions in place because of COVID-19. Go To Meeting and Zoom were utilized to capture video and audio from the interviews. I ensured that participants were informed of their participation rights, reiterating that participation in this qualitative inquiry research study was entirely voluntary. If they felt uncomfortable with any of the questions being asked at any point, I informed them that they could refuse to answer, skip the question, or request to stop participating in the study at any time.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I created an interview guide to direct the semi-structured, open-ended interviews with participants. The interview questions were clear, concise, and well-defined to obtain quality responses from participants. The interview questions and how they correlated to each research question and sub-research question are shown below:

1. Discuss why you became an educator. **(SQR1, SQR1b)**
2. Discuss why you decided to enter the educational system. **(SQR1, SQR1a, SQR1b)**
3. Describe what motivates you to stay within the educational system. **(SQR2)**
4. Discuss your perceived role and personal responsibilities as a Black male educator. **(SQR2a)**
5. What expectations do you have for your students? **(SQR2a)**
6. How do your expectations of students compare to those held by the administration? **(SQR2a)**
7. Discuss your challenges as a Black male educator in New Jersey. **(SQR1a)**
8. Are there additional challenges that you may not have faced but are aware can happen to Black male educators in New Jersey? **(SQR1a, SQR1b)**
9. Discuss what you believe would encourage Black men to become educators. **(SQR1a, SQR1b)**
10. Describe how your personal experiences shape your ability to influence your students. **(SQR2, SQR2a)**
11. Describe how your emotions affect your teaching style. **(SQR2, SQR2a)**
12. Have you had moments where you considered leaving the teaching profession? If so, could you discuss the situation and what made you stay? **(SQR2)**

Saturation

The sample size of qualitative research varies according to the amount of data that must be obtained pending data saturation (Mei & Lantai, 2018). Attaining data saturation is a cyclical process. I identified themes throughout the data analysis and kept building on the themes as additional participants were interviewed until other interviews no longer yielded different themes (Hennink et al., 2019; Rosenthal, 2016). Hanson et al. (2011) confirmed that qualitative research themes and patterns can be obtained from small samples and that, generally, data saturation can be reached by interviewing 20 participants. As a result, it was expected that the 13 participants in this qualitative inquiry research study would lead to data saturation, where the same ideas were expressed in different interviews. Consistent with this notion, I began seeing data saturation after approximately nine interviews, as the participants generally reiterated the same themes and subthemes. Despite reaching saturation, I continued with the interviews until all 13 participants had completed the interviews. Thus, I concluded that data saturation was reached and that no further interviews would have identified different ideas or themes.

Data Analysis and Results

During the interviews, the participants were prompted about their recent experiences as a Black male K-12 educator in New Jersey from multiple angles. To this end, I utilized each sub-research question as a theme, which became the main code. The themes identified were: (a) the perceived barriers to entry for Black male teachers, (b) the perceived opportunities for Black male teachers when entering the education profession, (c) factors that influence Black men to choose teaching as a profession, (d) the influence of race and gender on Black male teachers' perspectives on being an educator, and (e) how Black male teachers' K-12 experiences informed their decision to stay in education.

Overview of the Structure of the Data Analysis and Results Section

Themes 1, 2, and 3 answered the first sub-research question:

SRQ1: What factors influence Black men to choose teaching as a profession?

SRQ1a: What are the perceived barriers of entry for Black male teachers?

SRQ1b: What are the perceived access opportunities for Black male teachers?

The data analysis for SRQ1a was combined into Theme 1, while the data analysis for SRQ1b was incorporated into Theme 2. I directly asked participants SRQ1 as the first interview question; this data were presented and coalesced into Theme 3. Since SRQ1a and SRQ1b were designed to answer SRQ1, conceptualized in Theme 3, I include a summary of Themes 1-3 before moving on to Themes 4 and 5.

Themes 4 and 5 answered the second sub-research question:

SRQ2: How have Black male teachers' K-12 experiences informed their decisions to stay in education as a career path?

SRQ2a: Do race and gender influence the Black male teachers' perspective on the teaching profession?

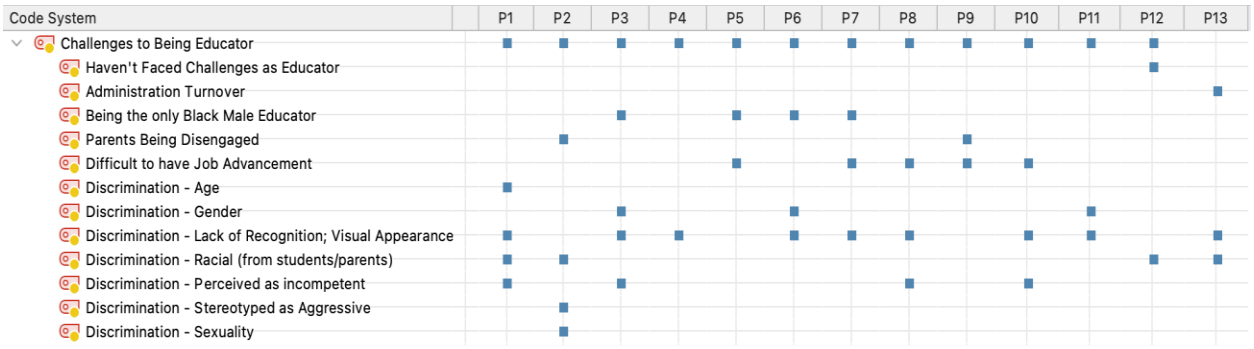
The data analysis for SRQ2a was combined into Theme 4, while the data analysis for SQR2 was presented in Theme 5. I now discuss each data theme from the teachers' perceptions.

Theme 1: Perceived Barriers to Entry for Black Male Teachers. One of the sub-research questions in this study was what factors motivate African American men to become educators in the K-12 public school system. Thus, it seemed fitting to ask what Black male teachers perceived as barriers to entering the K-12 educational system; it was especially fitting for this group of participants because they lived the obstacles in the educational system. The

participants described many barriers to entering the K-12 public school system. The code-subcode hierarchy for this theme is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Barriers to Entering K-12 Education as a Black Male Educator, as Perceived by Participants



Challenges that the participants faced generally fell into two categories: perceived barriers related to the public school system and administration, and various types of discrimination. Perceived obstacles associated with the public school system and administration are addressed first.

Administrative Challenges. The participants identified several factors they perceived as barriers to education from the school or administration levels. For example, four participants (P3, P5, P6, and P7) said they found it challenging to be the only Black male educator in their school. P5 says, "[Black men] are seen as a novelty in some schools, and let me clarify why. It's why I say novelty is because I've been working in New Jersey for some time now, and my last, you know, my last assignment, I was the only Black male teacher on her staff of probably one hundred." Similarly, P7 said:

> And so the teachers and the support staff are mostly female. That's even today. Right now, in the building that I work in…I think there are maybe seventeen classrooms, but there are only four male classroom teachers. Wow. Yeah. And we're not all Black.

Thus, the participants expressed a challenge in being the one Black male educator at their school of employment. The effects of this situation led P7 to say further, “They overlook us [Black male teachers] all the time.” Similarly, P6 said, “I can say how I felt, but nothing changes. You can feel this way, but you’re outnumbered, so nothing changes.” Thus, the participants expressed loneliness in their profession, even years after beginning their career, because they were the only Black male teacher in their school.

Other participants highlighted additional barriers and challenges related to school administration and the school environment. P13 avidly described administrative turnover as a challenge to entering the profession. P13 said, “I’m [in a] school where we’ve had so much turnover as far as principals. We’ve had six principals in the last ten years.” P13 explained that the turnover of school administrators changes policies, school environment, and school attitude every 1-2 years, which makes learning about the school and its atmosphere almost impossible. Other educators (P2 and P9) cited that their engagement with the children’s parents was less than optimal in terms of the influence on the children. P2 said, “You make [a kid] do something that he’s not used to doing because [he’s] home. When I teach, there’s always a lot of negativity and nothing positive from the parents. That makes me cringe just thinking about it.” Thus, some educators feel that how parents treat their children can sometimes be a barrier to entering the education system.

Many participants felt that a lack of upward mobility in the education system prevents entering the profession. Participants P5, P7, P8, P9, and P10 expressed opinions about the lack of advancement potential. On this topic, P5 said, “After you study, you do your time, you have your qualifications and experience, and it’s still hard to get that administrative role.” When asked what advice he had for Black male educators beginning their career, P7 stated, “I want to say to

them: [you'll] be overlooked for higher positions." P10 also noted, "[That] Black men don't get career support is quite disappointing. That's one of the things that upset me. Because you make an impact on the children's lives. That's one of the biggest issues that I see." Thus, the lack of upward mobility in public school K-12 education is an essential barrier to entry for Black male educators.

Age and Gender Discrimination. According to the participants, another overwhelming barrier to entering education in the K-12 public education sector was discrimination that came in various forms. The participants relayed that they were the victims of (a) age discrimination (P1); (b) gender discrimination (P3, P6, P11); (c) discrimination regarding visual appearance (P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, and P13); (d) academic discrimination (P1, P3, P8, and P10); (e) sexual discrimination (P2); and (f) racial discrimination (P1, P2, P12, and P13). At least one participant (P2) reported being stereotyped as aggressive. In the following paragraphs, an example of each type of discrimination is examined as the participants perceived it.

P1 reported age discrimination as follows:

> It was just being looked upon because of my age and not as what I was capable of doing. What did I need to do to prove myself? I was being looked down upon because I was young. And because I'm young, I must be a gym teacher. It was a challenge until I proved them wrong.

This quotation highlighted many issues that are examined in the remainder of this theme. This participant related age discrimination and revealed what I call "academic discrimination." P1 felt as if his teaching abilities were being questioned, in this case, due to his age.

Many participants referred to K-12 education as being "female-dominant." However, P3, P6, and P11 reported being victims of gender discrimination. P3 said:

> I'm going to say it's dominated by females. For years, I would be in a room in meetings with females and females, and they were just talking. They were talking. They're going back and forth, and sometimes you can't jump and get a word in edgewise. Because they're going back to give their thoughts, and it's like sometimes I feel like I don't know, my thoughts don't matter?

In other words, P3 felt his ideas were not valued because he could not speak at meetings, presumably due to his gender. P6 similarly said:

> They might say it's the Black man talking, but if a Black woman agreed, it would be more open and respected. Sometimes being a Black man in education, you're expected to do the work and not voice your concern sometimes. I have a problem with that.

Like P1 with age discrimination, P11 also described a mix of academic discrimination and gender discrimination: "Education as a whole is a female-dominated career. Yes. So, they felt like when they are in a room with a bunch of educated teachers, they couldn't get a word in edgewise because people didn't look at them as qualified educators." For P11, being male in a room of educators lessened his qualifications for being an educator. In this way, gender discrimination is a transparent barrier to entry into the K-12 public education system.

Visual Discrimination. Age and gender discrimination were not the only types experienced by the participants. Nine of the 13 participants (P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, and P13) reported being discriminated against due to their appearance. P1 explained, "One of the biggest challenges that I've dealt with are comments because I'm a young Black male teacher. He looks like a gym teacher. He looks like he's a substitute teacher." P8 was similarly mistaken for a gym teacher. P11 had a similar experience: "Some people felt like they had the gym teacher

stereotype just ‘cause I’m a Black man. I’m a gym teacher, you know, and I’m not, you know, qualified to teach your child, you know, general education, social studies, math, science.”

P4 had yet another similar experience that extended beyond the classroom:

> I guess my challenges would be having approval or being validated as a teacher, as an educator. Ironically, [Black male educators] are few, so especially if you’re entering a conference or another workspace, people don’t expect you to say you’re a teacher. Either you’re in maintenance, a chef, or a delivery person, so you have to prove that you’re accredited to teach.

Like P4, P10 also experienced discrimination inside his school building from students and school staff:

> I had a situation where two White students entered my office, and they said, “We have a Black sub teacher today.” I just said that I want you to know that every Black man teaching is not a substitute teacher. I can remember in the pandemic when a woman told me to open a classroom for her like I’m a custodian. It’s those perceptions of people of color.

One of the most telling accounts of visual or racial discrimination came from an encounter that P11 witnessed:

> There was an incident [at my school] where a Black male teacher, the first-year teacher, came in. He was a student, and the parents didn’t want to talk to him because he was [Black]. What I perceived was about appearance. [The parent was] basically saying, why is the Black male teaching my child? Who was White? It was more like a standoff conversation. It’s definitely an eye-opener. It happens.

As such, many participants experienced this type of discrimination, whereby others believed that being a Black male educator meant being a gym teacher. Participants relayed that visual discrimination led others to view them as less capable of teaching children. Other participants experience racial discrimination in the classroom, where parents were unhappy when a teacher of another race taught their child.

Sexual Discrimination. While this was not commonly mentioned in the interviews, P2 mentioned that sexual discrimination was also likely at work:

> The males that I see there are the ones that are heterosexual Black males. That road is rough, but for the homosexual Black male, that road is easy. There are [high] expectations of heterosexual Black males, and all kinds of things get said behind your back, even though it's a whole different brand to it. Some sisters look at you like, "Why aren't you talking to me?" or they find out you're married. If you buy a sandwich for a female, they start saying you're hitting on them."

While not mentioned frequently in interviews, this type of discrimination is necessary because it ties in with gender and age discrimination.

Academic Discrimination. In this study, academic discrimination was defined as discrimination against an individual where a person acts negatively towards a person being discriminated against for such reasons as the individual is not intelligent, credentialed, or qualified to be an educator. Expressing a mix of age, gender, and academic discrimination, P1 said, "Because I'm young and I'm Black, I'm someone that is incompetent or incapable of doing stuff after thirteen years of teaching." P8 further explained:

> The negative thing would be, like I said, some of the stereotypes. [People] will assume that your education level isn't on par with theirs. You know, sometimes the assumption is my grades were mediocre or, you know, I got here because I'm an affirmative action hire.

This participant expressed the concept of "affirmative action hiring," which implied that an individual was only hired to increase the diversity of the employment group and, in turn, suggesting that the participant did not earn his position.

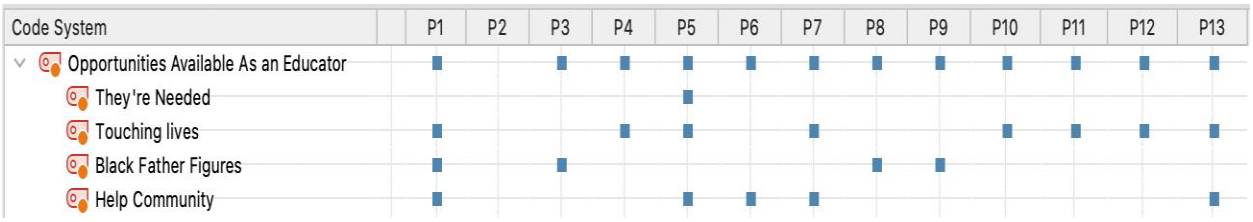
Summary of Theme 1. In Theme 1, the participants elucidated barriers to entry into the field of education at the K-12 level. Some of these barriers included a lack of job stability in administrative turnover, loneliness in the school community due to being the only Black male educator, disengaged parents, and difficulty with upward mobility in the K-12 school system. Administrative barriers were not the only perceived barriers to entry. Participants collectively reported being discriminated against due to age, gender, visual appearance, and academic and sexual discrimination. Theme 1 can largely be seen as the "cons" to entering the K-12 education system for a Black male educator. Despite this lengthy discussion, the interviews were uplifting, and the participants expressed many opportunities for Black male teachers in K-12 education. These participants' perceptions of these opportunities are now examined in Theme 2.

Theme 2: Perceived Opportunities for Black Male Teachers When Entering the Education Profession. In Theme 1, the participants discussed what they perceived to be barriers to entry into the K-12 education system as Black male educators. These walls were discussed from the participants' experiences and the experiences they shared with colleagues. The analysis now considers the opposite side of the coin in this section, looking at what the participants viewed as opportunities for those who decide to entire K-12 education as a Black male educator.

Participants identified opportunities available as Black male educators that fell into four categories: (a) Black male educators are genuinely needed, (b) Black male educators have the opportunity to touch the lives of the children they teach, (c) they have an opportunity to be father figures, and (d) they have a profound opportunity to help their communities (see Figure 3). Each of these ideas is now discussed in turn.

Figure 3

Perceived Opportunities for Black Male Educators



Black Male Educators Are Genuinely Needed. P5 was the only participant who identified this opportunity. It was chosen for analysis because this discussion ties into the other identified subthemes: touching lives and helping the community. When asked what he would say to encourage Black men to pursue education, P5 said:

> I would definitely stress the fact that recruiters need to persuade or impress upon Black men how much they're needed, not wanted, right, not willing to accommodate how much behind needed like, they're like the need is so great that I think if we focus on just that, like listen.

This is such an essential idea that it became a theme by itself. This particular quotation frames the remainder of the section because it touches on opportunities to touch the lives of children. They can be father figures for children who need one or be mentors in other ways, and have a chance to help their communities. Thus, this subtheme is inextricably linked to the subthemes that are analyzed in this subsection. P5 further explained, "See how many people you can inspire.

I would definitely focus on that, show these Black men how much they are needed and valued like they're just priceless." In this way, P5 demonstrated that Black male educators are needed for teaching, and the other subthemes subsequently discussed this, including touching lives.

Touching Lives. One of the most prevalent responses regarding opportunities was that the educators all valued the opportunity to touch the lives of the children they served. Participants P1, P4, P5, P7, P10, P11, P12, and P13 all highlighted the notion that one of the most significant opportunities for Black male educators is to touch the lives of the children in their community. P1 explained:

> Listen, money runs this world, right? So why not? But at the same time…interacting with young futures. You're not interacting with paper and pen or numbers. You're interacting with another human being. And your approach could affect that child forever. It's not like, oh, a client. Okay, move on. This is a young child that you could imprint something positive or something negative on that child. You could be the reason why that child wants to become a doctor…. From one extreme to the large extremes in the middle, your imprint matters.

Thus, P1 explained that the opportunities are endless for Black male educators to touch the lives of the children they teach. Even small interactions can have a ripple effect on the lives of children. P7 further explained:

> I saw myself becoming—and I don't talk like this—a beacon of hope and inspiration…. I found myself encouraging [the special education children] and giving them that inspiration or those words of encouragement, breaking things down for them in ways where they understand how to get the things or do the things they want to do. So, they always kind of flock to me for that. I would say this to a person who may be considering

> education. I feel as long as you're pushing positivity, hope, and inspiration progression in life.

For P7, one of the significant opportunities for entering K-12 education is the positive effect he can have on the lives of others. P10 not only highlighted the same theme but also gave suggestions on how to "rewrite" some of the bad experiences of the past:

> You have the responsibility to be a good teacher. You have an opportunity to make a serious impact in the life of young people, and you have the opportunity to change the narratives that may have been your horrible education experience.

P10 is passionate about impacting the children and seeks to serve as a community healer; by breaking the cycle of suboptimal education with suboptimal mentors, P10 believes that he can impact children while attempting to right some of the wrongs of the past. For P13, leaving a mark on the world is one opportunity he sees in education, as he noted:

> The fulfillment you get from that is, to me, it's quite a feeling. It's very powerful, and for me, it gives me a little bit of purpose as far as being on Earth, to be honest with you, like just knowing that. This is the mark I'm leaving these kids that I have, and I see many of my kids everywhere.

In this way, the majority of the participants viewed touching the lives of children to be one of the most significant opportunities in education.

Black Father Figures. Many participants took the thought of touching young lives a step further by discussing the notion that they serve as father figures for some of the children. For these participants (P1, P3, P8, and P9), touching the lives of children meant that they were informal father figures, which all took seriously as a privilege and an honor. P1 offered a reason why children are looking for Black father figures:

> If we look at incarceration, there's a lot of Black males. And if we look back to why the Black males are there, it's because there's no father figure in their life. And if you look [at the children], there's no Black, no father figure in their life. Then everything just cycles. So, if [there are] more Black male teachers, then they have Black father figures.

Thus, P1 believes that the lack of a Black male father figure can be detrimental to Black children; consequently, he believes that Black male educators can partially fill that void, bringing immense support and relief to children. P3 expressed similar sentiments, highlighting his want to be a role model. P3 said, "First and foremost…I want to be a role model, show them the right ways, even be another parent because I'm with them for most of the day." P8 also expressed similar sentiments and believes his role as a father figure is critical. P8 explained that money is not necessarily motivating for all who enter K-12 education:

> You could make excellent benefits. Everybody knows that teachers have good benefits in their salaries, or at least decent. But that internal feeling of like, hey, I'm a role model for young brothers. You have to sell that. That's our selling point.

Thus, some of the participants not only took the idea of touching the lives of children to heart but also viewed their roles as male father figures when necessary and sought by the child.

Helping Their Communities. The last subtheme discussed is the opportunity for Black male educators in K-12 education to make a positive change in their communities. This line of thought differed drastically from the notions of touching lives and being father figures, as these lines of inquiry focused on the individual children. Helping the community extends past the individual into affecting those who are not children. As such, the community can be defined in different ways. It could refer to the families of the children or the extended families of the children, or the word *community* could describe the community-at-large to include people not

directly affected by the school children. For this study, the word *community* was used inclusively to encompass the entire school community.

In terms of helping their community, P1 said, "I think one of the biggest things to encourage Black males to become teachers is that they have a lot of different ways to affect their community…. Changing your community and [being] a voice for our students is priceless." In this way, P1 described being "a voice for our students." This voice would not only extend to parents and family but also to other community members who have the power and opportunity to help the children and the community. P5 expanded that the impact educators have on teachers now will impact the lives of the children and their surrounding community:

> Someone said to me that as a community teacher, I can be the reason these students go to college and become doctors or engineers, or I can be the reason these students go to jail, and that was real. I was like, wow, that's powerful.

Thus, from P5's perspective, a child's ultimate career choice and life choices begin in the childhood stage. Moreover, P5 believes a positive educational experience could propel children to become career professionals. In contrast, a negative educational experience could push children into a downward spiral that negatively affects themselves and their community. Thus, an overwhelming opportunity, and a challenge, for the participants is to provide an environment for both the children's growth and the growth of communities.

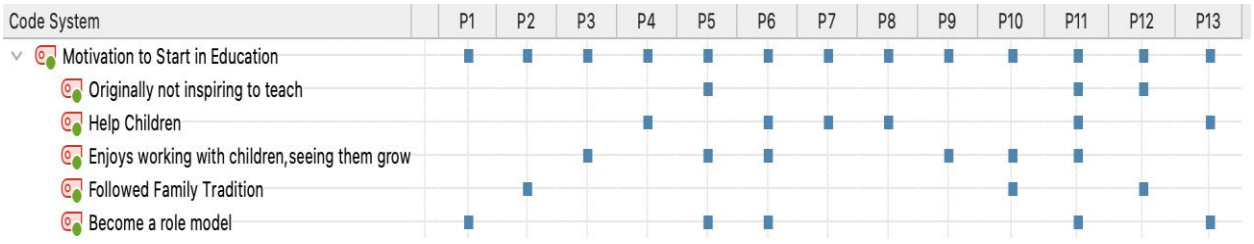
Synthesis of Themes 1 and 2. The interview questions and research sub-questions that led to Themes 1 and 2 were designed to probe the perceptions of Black male educators for barriers to entry to K-12 education as well as opportunities that they saw for Black males to enter K-12 education. Theme 1 was filled with overwhelmingly negative experiences and perceptions because all participants described being discriminated against in some fashion; some of these

discriminatory factors included age, gender, visual appearance, race, and sexuality. In contrast, Theme 2 was filled with overwhelming hope and positivity. The participants shared experiences in which they felt like a positive part of their community, they enjoyed taking on mentoring roles for the children, and many felt overwhelming joy and pride in touching the lives of children. Thus, when Themes 1 and 2 are taken together, Black male educators can look past the discrimination they encounter daily to fulfill their purpose in educating and mentoring young lives. Thus, for these participants, the opportunities outweigh the challenges and the barriers. This analysis leads to a direct answer to the research question. Black male educators entered the K-12 education profession out of a service-oriented want to help their communities and the children within their communities.

Theme 3: Factors Influencing Black Men to Choose Teaching as a Profession. One of the main sub-research questions addressed in the study is which factors influence Black men to choose teaching as a profession. In interview question 1, I directly asked the participants why they chose to pursue a career in education. While the participants each had reasons for becoming a teacher, they converged into four general reasons (see Figure 4). First, participants found that they were following a family tradition of being educators. Second, others admitted that they were not initially interested in teaching. Third, some participants cited that they went into the field of education because they had always enjoyed working with and helping children. Fourth, most participants relayed that they became teachers to help the children under their purview or become positive role models for the community and the children. Importantly, all participants answered this question, and all responses fell into one of the above categories.

Figure 4

Reasons Participants Chose Teaching as a Profession



Following a Family Tradition. Several participants (P2, P10, and P12) expressed that their initial interest in teaching came from being raised in a home with educators. For some participants, education was all they knew. For example, P10 said:

> Watching my parents and the impacts they were able to have in East Orange for my mom and my dad. You know, those days you go to work with your parents and see the impact and the response from the kids. My dad was a little different because he was an administrator; he went from principal to director of special education, which is vital. Just seeing the respect people have for him not because he matched them all but because he helps people.

Thus, P10 had exposure to education from a very young age, was comfortable in education, and wanted to emulate his parents, who garnered so much respect from the community. Similarly, P12 said, “My sister’s an educator. My mother was a social worker. So that exposure. Right. So, I had that exposure and that lineage that not everyone has. So that’s what, that’s what persuaded me to give it a try.” Thus, for some Black male educators, education played a significant role in shaping who they became as young adults; this emphasis on education transformed into a desire to continue in education.

Not Originally Interested in Teaching. Not all participants knew they wanted to be teachers and educators from early childhood. On the contrary, three participants (P5, P11, and P12) did not develop an interest or passion for teaching until after they moved on to other careers or paths. For example, P5 was not initially interested in education for the precise reason this study was being conducted; he said, "If I'm speaking frankly, I wasn't inspired to become a teacher. So, let's start from there. So, I wasn't inspired because when I'm like, no, I've never really seen any male teachers." Thus, not having seen male teachers in his youth was a critical impression on this participant. This directly addressed SRQ2a, as it demonstrated that gender did influence this participant's perspective on the teaching profession. P12, on the other hand, was focused on going into some service profession but did not initially think of teaching. P12 said:

> I ran away from becoming an educator for a while…. And I worked alongside a Teach for America teacher in ninth grade algebra. That was my first exposure to the classroom. I never really considered an interest in teaching. I would say I was more so interested in the community and the collectivity around education. So, I always liked volunteering and doing beautification projects and things of that nature while I was a core member, but that was my first introduction. So, I would say the educational community at large is when I moved to Miami to be of service in that capacity.

Importantly, P12 highlighted an important notion: he did not view education as a service-related profession. Still, after entering the field of education, he began to consider the profession as one who served the community and the children. In this way, he fulfilled his desire to enter a service-oriented field to make his career. Taken together, Themes 3A and 3B offer two contrasting methods of entry into the education field, as some participants were exposed to education as

children and saw the value in a career in education. In contrast, other participants did not realize that education was a viable career option.

Enjoyed Working with Children. Most participants (P3, P5, P6, P9, P10, and P11) always knew that they wanted to work with children; consequently, the love of working with children drove them to pursue careers in teaching. P3, for example, said, "I want to work with kids, but I think I have a general love for kids. I just wanted to find a career where I could work with kids and assist them in any way possible. And I thought of a different career path, but somehow teaching just kind of stuck with me." Similarly, P6 said:

> I loved nurturing students, and I could see my impact on those kids myself. I'm Black, and if so, I decided I would have an educational occupation if I wanted to pursue it, and I have kids that are like, "Hey, are you not going to consider what you're doing right now, probably be a leader and teacher." So, I was able to pursue education, and I was able to see things I saw happening and couldn't leave education.

P6 addressed his motivation for entering the teaching profession—to see children grow and thrive—and also addressed why he is motivated to stay in education (Theme 5) for the same reason. P6 was inspired by seeing the progress and growth of the children. In a similar thread, P10 said, "It's funny because I got into education because I like working with children…. I got into the program, which was the best decision. It pushed me into working with young people and my love for them." These examples suggested that most participants' motivation was altruistic; they enjoyed working with children, enjoyed seeing children grow and thrive, and consequently chose to teach as a profession so they could choose a career they truly loved.

Motivated to Help Children and Become Positive Role Models for the Community. This has two components, as some participants stated that they wanted to help children. In cmparison, other participants said their goals were to become positive role models in their communities. I viewed these two ideas as the same because when teachers help the children they serve, they become positive role models for the children and the community.

Many participants (P4, P6, P7, P8, P11, and P13) were motivated to teach because they wanted to help children. For example, P4 said, "I went for an undergrad in psychology, I wanted to be a child's psychologist, but I realized that it was more about health for students with behavior as a post-to diagnosis, so I went to the classrooms." Thus, P4 discovered that he might have a better impact on children as a teacher rather than as a psychologist because teaching would allow him to work with children consistently to see the change he wanted to affect. P4 further explained these thoughts:

> Teachers are out six hours of the day, so they are more involved and have more of an impact on children with behaviors and developing social-emotional skills as opposed to psychology skills where a counselor provides insight to diagnosis. Because many students will rarely reach the level where they'll need a psychologist, being involved as a teacher to help provide viable educational plans for students, serves more of an imperative role in raising and supporting and developing a child in my opinion.

As such, the teaching profession offered P4 a more satisfying way to approach helping children than his original venture into child psychology. This tied in with Theme 2B, as P4's initial career thoughts were not entirely focused on teaching. P7 offered a different perspective:

> But because I was already in special needs, I just started to feel like something wasn't right. I worked in Jersey City then, and I'm from Jersey City. So, I was like, what's

> happening with the children? Like what's happening with them, they're going through these situations with anger and frustration. And I saw they had no coping skills. And the majority of them were males. In the first class I worked in, the students were between the ages of eleven to fourteen. And then, the following year, I worked with students between the ages of five and ten, and they were worse than the eleven to fourteen group. Their anger, their behavior, it just was so wrong. They would fight each other and cuss at each other. They would lead the class. They would throw furniture and try to throw books in front. Yeah, it wasn't good. And the majority of them were on medication. I had never been inside a public school since I had left high school. So that was a little bit of a gap. And I was one of those students when I was in elementary school or high school.

The account of P7 was illuminating in many ways. He saw behavioral problems in the classroom and emphasized with the children, as he was one of those children at one time. As such, this motivated him to become a teacher to affect the children and communities positively because he grew up and identified with them.

P8, P11, and P13 all wanted to help the children by having a positive impact. P8 equated teaching with life skills:

> I love that I could take somebody with preconceptions of what things are like. But at the same time, they weren't stuck in them, you know, and it comes with anything 'cause as I'm teaching language arts, I'm teaching kids about life.

In the same thread, P11 said, "I like that part of being an educator, just helping, helping these kids expand their minds and looking at other opportunities out there that maybe no one else is talking about." P13 not only highlighted the positive impact he wanted to make on the children but also expressed that the children had a profound effect on him. As P13 said, "When I started

to teach, that was what I wanted to do, and I knew I could reach kids and the positive impact. The kids have [a positive impact] on my life as well."

In summing up the first portion of this theme, one may conclude that many educators went into teaching to have a positive effect on the lives of children, which, in turn, had a positive impact on them. Related to these ideas was the notion that educators were motivated by wanting to be positive role models. In addition to those already discussed, P1, P5, P6, P11, and P13 exemplified this theme and these ideas. In support of the notion that some educators were primarily motivated by being positive role models, P1 said, "[My first year of teaching] made me realize that I don't want the next generation to follow the same [destructive] path. Why not be a role model for these kids? Stay. Work through whatever they need to work through. That's how I look at it." Similarly, P5 wanted to show the children that they could grow up to be successful, as he was able to do so himself:

> I just saw the impact that I had—that I could relate my story. Hey, your face is my face. I could see where you're going. I know the neighborhood you're from because it was my neighborhood. So, in my mind, I thought that maybe my journey could inspire others.

P11 spoke in support of these ideas:

> I see a lot of the students look like me, but many who were teaching and educating don't *hear* some conversations from different teachers. Due to the way [some teachers] spoke to the kids, I felt like the kids needed to hear more positive things. I've always looked at myself as a motivator and encouragement.

These participants all expressed a profound desire to inspire children and help them thrive and grow. Many of the participants wished to do so through example by being positive role models

for the children, always speaking to them kindly, encouraging them, and motivating them to continue pursuing their education.

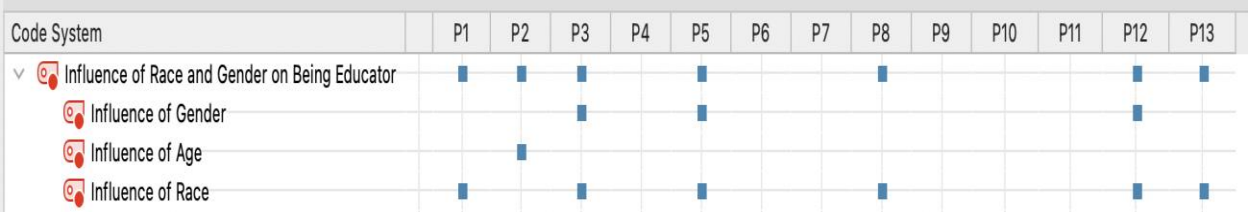
Summary of Theme 3. In summary, I utilized interview question 1 to investigate why Black male teachers chose to enter the field of K-12 education, specifically, why they decided to join the classroom. The participants revealed that they were generally motivated by following a family tradition of being educators, while other participants admitted that they were not interested initially in teaching but fell in love with the profession after exposure; other participants enjoyed working with children and helping children, and the majority of participants relayed that they became teachers to either help the children under their purview or become positive role models for the community and the children. Participants who followed a family tradition of being educators saw the value of being an educator at an early age and wanted to have the same impact on their community that their parents did before them. Interestingly, some did not initially want to be educators and had chosen careers other than teaching; for these participants, gaining exposure to the classroom revealed a profound interest in joining the education community. Still, other participants knew they wanted to teach from a young age because they wanted to work with children, nurture them, and see them grow. Lastly, some participants entered the profession for unselfish reasons as they tried to become community leaders who are positive role models and mentors for the children. Having now discussed the motivations of these Black educators for pursuing a career in education, I now turn to how Black male educators perceive the influence of race and gender on their abilities and capacities to educate the children in their classrooms.

Theme 4: Influence of Race and Gender on Black Male Teachers' Perspectives on Being an Educator. This theme discusses the Black male teachers' views on the influence of

race and gender on being an educator. Interestingly, when talking about race and gender, the participants expressed both positive and negative sentiments. The influence of race and gender was not always positive, but it was not always negative either. Not all participants directly answered this question in a fashion by which I could make comparisons between participants. For example, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, and P11 did not answer the question directly, and therefore, they are not discussed here; P1, P2, P3, P5, P8, P12, and P13 all responded to the question, and so their results are presented here (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Participants' Perceptions of the Role of Race and Gender in Being an Educator



Role of Gender in Being an Educator. Three participants (P3, P5, and P12) mentioned that gender was critical to being an educator. P5 and P12 generally found it difficult to be the only Black male educator in a community of educators; it was not necessarily that they felt awkward being a Black male, but rather just being a male in a female-dominant field. P5 directly reported being treated differently as an educator than his female counterparts:

> So, you'll have a staff. Let's see; you have a staff of ninety-five or whatever. Practically you'll have about ten male staff there, and the others are females. So technically, as a male, you're a disciplinarian, whether you want it or not. Like the female staff, our colleagues will always go to you for assistance dealing with behavior issues. You're just always seen as an individual to go to solve this problem. When in your mind, you probably sometimes want to be left alone to do your thing.

Thus, P5 shared that he was treated differently from female educators, mainly by being used as a disciplinary force simply because he was male. However, P3 had a different perspective on the role of gender in being an educator:

> I don't think many people consider teaching the ideal job for a Black man. Many Black men were in service, underpaid, undervalued, and under everything. So, why go into a career where you're automatically going to run into that, especially if you don't know the impact that you'll have? It is a stressful job. None of my immediate friends are educators. Like guys that grew up with me. My friends are educated. I don't blame them. I understand. But I think to be in education, you have to understand it, you know, what your role is, what you do, how you will affect these kids?

In this way, P3 believed that being a Black male educator is somewhat of a rarity in his life and community. He is unique in being a Black male and choosing teaching as his profession. Interestingly, he showed both the upsides and downsides to this. On one hand, it can be lonely being the only one in a community group to go into a particular profession; on the other hand, being able to influence children because of being a Black man in education is also profoundly positive.

Effect of Race on Being an Educator. Six of the 13 participants believed that race impacted being able to become an educator. While some participants interpreted the question to mean the adverse effects of race on being an educator, others interpreted the question to examine the positive impact of race on being an educator. Each type of response is discussed in turn.

P8 interpreted the question as if it was about the adverse effects of race on being an educator:

> Okay, well, [they're] not going to give you a free pass just because you're a brother in this kind of district. They're going to make sure that you've earned your keep. And sometimes that, quite frankly, that's not fair because you look at another teacher the same way who's a different race and give them a harder vetting process because of the color of their skin?

P8 found that race affects being an educator simply because there are unstated but different racial standards. P8 said, "I ask: why am I experiencing a harder time doing the same thing that the other teachers are doing? Somebody mentioned that it could be because you're a Black male, and they're intimidated. They feel like they need to make sure that you belong there." As such, there is a difference in standards between teachers of different races—the ultimate definition of race affects being an educator.

Other participants viewed the question about the effect of race positively. For example, P1 took race to heart:

> My expectations for my Black students are the same, but also my expectations for them to connect with me on a different level, on a level that they feel even more comfortable knowing that I'm their teacher, for them to feel more confident that a male Black man is their teacher. So those are the expectations added on for my Black students. More confident, more outgoing, more relaxed, and just me. I expect them to see me as their role model.

In this way, P1 sees race as a positive thing he can use to inspire other young African Americans. Race to this participant is not a detriment but an inspiration. Similarly, P5 said:

> Yeah, the hidden curriculum, that's probably one of the biggest impacts. It's been coined many things. The social-emotional growth still does a hidden curriculum, and there's so

> much that happens in school as it prepares, you know, students for life, that sort of thing. So, I think with me, I think it's just life's internal life experiences. I want to model that. In essence, I'd like to see kids see a Black individual modeling a type of lifestyle that doesn't look weird.

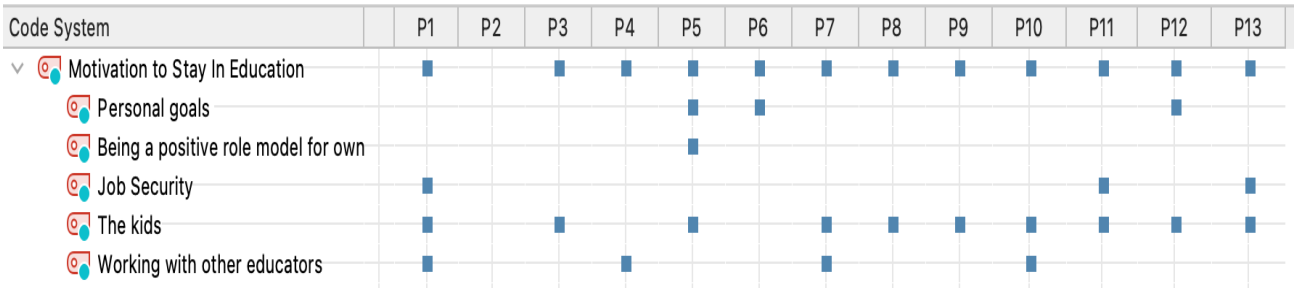
P5, like P1, viewed the role of race in education as a positive mechanism by which he can influence the lives of children. In these cases, race was not seen as a detriment to the K-12 teaching profession but rather an asset.

To summarize Theme 4, many participants viewed that gender and race affected them as they navigated their K-12 education careers. Notably, while gender and race discrimination were highlighted, the participants also highlighted that differences in race and gender did not always have to be labeled as discrimination. Race and gender could be viewed as factors that can contribute positively to the lives of children. As the participants took on their roles and responsibilities as educators, they also took on their roles as Black male educators and used their identities to be role models for the children.

Theme 5: How Black Male Teachers' K-12 Experiences Informed Their Decision to Stay in Education. In interview question 2, I probed why Black male teachers decided to stay in the field of education and did not transition to administrative roles. There were four general responses to this question (see Figure 6); the participants were generally motivated by (a) personal goals, (b) job security, (c) enjoying teaching the children, and (d) working with other mentors and educators. Each of these identified subthemes is discussed in turn.

Figure 6

Participants' Motivation for Staying in the Field of Education



Motivated by Personal Goals. Three of the 13 participants (P5, P6, and P12) cited achieving their personal teaching goals as a motivating force to stay in education. These participants entered the profession with a vision and did not anticipate leaving it until their vision was complete. For example, P6 said:

> I feel like I haven't even reached my mark yet. I want to continue to master [teaching] because I haven't mastered it yet. I want to say that I'm in it until I master it. I can be that person that will first give that mental experience and then an impression on readers. I take this thing seriously, which is one of the reasons I haven't left yet.

Like P6, P5 also expressed an unwillingness to leave the profession until his teaching skills matched his expectations. P12 had a different perspective on his personal goals and their relationship to teaching; this participant was very team-oriented, as he said:

> Lack of organization, structure, and alignment with curriculum, and seeing that students, year after year, aren't exceeding expectations and aren't needing proficiency. They need coaching. Those challenges caught my attention because my approach to education is the same approach a coach would take to whatever sport. I want to see my team win. My team consists of my students. So, whatever is in the way, we need to break that down. And right now, I'm a teacher. So, what's in the course is an obstacle that hinders academic performance. So that's been my sole mission, my sole goal. That's what keeps

> me where I am. And seeing that improvement year over year keeps me where I am because it's like, there's a lot of work to get done.

In this way, the participants conveyed motivation to perfect their teaching craft, which would benefit both the children and the teachers. One participant expressed that he approached his personal goals from the aspect of a team, with the students being his team; as such, this participant brought the children into his own goals.

Motivated by Job Security. Interestingly, three of the 13 (P1, P11, and P13) participants highlighted that job security was one of the main motivating factors to stay in the field of education. Interestingly, two of these participants (P1 and P13) had 13 and 22 years of experience, respectively, while the other (P11) had 5 years of experience. It is unknown whether any of the participants were tenured at the time of their interviews. To express their motivation for job security, P1 succinctly said, "Motivates me to stay? The main thing is job security." He then explained:

> Kids are going to be there regardless. I could go into a different profession and still work with kids. Okay, but the job security. After ten years, I was let go because of a rift and rehired back in August to return to work. If I'm thinking about being in a profession that I want to be in, and then every time the school year ends, I'm thinking about [whether my job will] hire me back. So, my first instinct will be job security because once I have tenured, by the time June comes, I'm not folding my arms up and saying, "Are they going to fire me today?"

Other participants expressed similar sentiments about enjoying the stability of a teaching profession for themselves and their families. Thus, the job security that comes with a career in teaching at least partially motivated some participants.

Motivated by the Enjoyment of Teaching the Children. An overwhelming number of the participants (P1, P3, P5, and P7-P13) cited that the children and enjoyment of teaching the children motivated them to continue to pursue a career in education. For example, P1 said, "It's the kids. It's working with the kids. It's seeing their growth, seeing them flourish and grow." Similarly, P8 said, "I've gotta take it back to the students, man. I can't stand the politics in the school system and the building…. It's like when I had a kid come back [to visit the school after he's gone], but [the child's] light is killing me." P13 also described joy in seeing the children light up. P13 said, "I love teaching, and that trumps much of the nonsense I see and deal with regularly. Watching kids light up when they learn something new or watching games and especially in math [is motivation]." Most participants cited that working with the children was, in part or in whole, their motivation to continue pursuing a career in education. Thus, the main driving factor for the Black male participants in this study was altruism, as they thrived on seeing the children grow through education.

Motivated by Working with Other Mentors and Educators. Some participants (P1, P4, P7, and P10) found desire and motivation in working with other enthusiastic and perceptive educators and mentors. In short, these participants believed that observing other educators gave them new ideas and inspiration to do better things for the children in their classrooms. P1 said, "The third thing is working with other passionate educators, the same as me. Once you have that, it's less work, and everybody is working together, pulling their resources to help every kid." Similarly, P7 said they were motivated by "the support of my peers' idea in my head that I could still make a difference." These participants found motivation in the notion that they were part of a bigger team to help the students. The good that each teacher did on their own paled in

comparison to the overall collective good that comes from passionate educators working together to enhance the lives of their students.

Summary of Theme 5. In summary, I utilized interview question 2 to investigate why Black male teachers chose to stay in the field of K-12 education and, specifically, why they decided to stay in the classroom. The participants revealed they were generally motivated by (a) personal goals, (b) job security, (c) enjoying teaching the children, and (d) working with other mentors and educators. Participants motivated by personal goals expressed that they had their own notions of what success looked like in a classroom. Having not fulfilled their visions yet, these participants explained that they wanted to continue pursuing education until they fulfilled their visions. Interestingly, some participants cited job security as a reason to remain in education, explaining that the pursuit of tenure and the possibility of job and financial security was a motivating factor. However, the most common reason Black male teachers chose to stay in the field of education was altruistic, as the participants highlighted that the children themselves and watching their growth and development were rewarding to them and were the main driving force for remaining in education.

Summary

Chapter 4 introduced the research question addressed by this study—namely, to identify the leading causes of Black males' decision to stay in the educational field in the state of New Jersey. The chapter contains a detailed account of the procedures I used in this study. The details of the interview collection, setting, and procedures are delineated so that any researcher can replicate them. Similarly, my data collection, analysis, and theme production processes were outlined in detail. Data saturation is discussed and was clearly reached.

The data from this qualitative study answered this research question, and further analysis of this is presented in Chapter 5. That said, five major themes emerged from the analysis of the data, each theme corresponding to a separate sub-research question. Theme 1 analyzed responses from **SRQ1a,** the perceived barriers to entry for Black male teachers. Theme 2 addressed responses to **SRQ1b,** the perceived opportunities for Black male teachers to enter. These two sub-research questions were designed to serve **SRQ1,** the factors influencing Black men to choose teaching as a profession. Thus, the results presented in Themes 1-3 answered SRQ1.

To answer SRQ1, in Themes 1-3, the participants demonstrated many perceived barriers to entry into the education field for a Black male teacher. Such barriers included a lack of perceived upward mobility; administrative turnover; and deep-rooted discrimination related to race, gender, sexuality, and age, which total almost all facets of a person's identity. Despite these perceived barriers, many participants felt there were great opportunities for a Black male to choose to enter K-12 education. For example, the participants highlighted the chances to become father figures, mentors, and community leaders. In Theme 3, all of these answers coalesced into the answer to one question: Why do Black males become educators? The overwhelming response to this question is that they do it for the children, and seeing them grow physically, socially, and emotionally gives them great pride in their work.

Themes 4 and 5 were designed to answer SRQ2a and SRQ2b, respectively. Thus, I used Theme 4 to discuss whether race and gender influenced a Black male teacher's perspective on teaching. In general, the participants agreed that race and gender played a role in their perspectives; some found it hard to cope with race and gender differences, while others embraced their race and gender to help other young African Americans navigate the same circumstances that they themselves had navigated. This discussion was overwhelmingly positive,

suggesting that Black male educators are comfortable in their perceived roles. Finally, in Theme 5, the participants directly answered why they decided to stay in the field of education. Not surprisingly, the majority of the participants stayed for the children. This was not ultimately surprising because most participants entered the education system to better the lives of children; they have continued that mission throughout their careers. In summary, the participants demonstrated that despite the racial, gender, and age barriers and discrimination they have faced, they chose education and remained in education to influence their students' lives positively.

In Chapter 5, I coalesce these results, draw conclusions from them, and tie these findings to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. I also make recommendations for improving the social and school community situation for Black male educators and identify avenues for future research based on this study's findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Black male teachers have been underrepresented in K-12 educational sectors (Vilson, 2015; Waite et al., 2018). This study's goal was to use interpretive phenomenological qualitative methods to better understand the underrepresentation of Black male educators in New Jersey school districts. In addition, this study provided insights into African American male high school students' choice to enter the K-12 education system and, more importantly, stay in a career in education. Chapter 5 first discusses the underlying themes presented in Chapter 4 and provides an analysis of how they relate to the literature presented in Chapter 2. The data and themes offer the perspectives and experiences of African American male teachers who chose to stay in the K-12 education field in New Jersey. The important quotes from the participants help to summarize the results and support ideals from the lens of critical race theory (CRT). Chapter 5 also contains the conclusions and implications of this study.

Data Analysis and Results

While being interviewed, the participants were asked about their recent experiences as a Black male K-12 educator, and sub-research questions were coded as themes. Several themes were identified: (a) perceived barriers to entry for Black male teachers, (b) perceived opportunities for Black male teachers when entering the education profession, (c) factors that influence Black men to choose teaching as a profession, (d) influence of race and gender on Black male teachers' perspectives of being an educator, and (e) how Black male teachers' K-12 experiences informed their decision to stay in education.

Contextual Analysis of Themes

Themes 1, 2, and 3 answered the first set of sub-research questions:

SRQ1: What factors influence Black men to choose teaching as a profession? (Theme 3)

SRQ1a: What are the perceived barriers of entry for Black male teachers? (Theme 1)

SRQ1b: What are the perceived access opportunities for Black male teachers? (Theme 2)

Themes 4 and 5 answered the second set of sub-research questions:

SRQ2: How have Black male teachers' K-12 experiences informed their decisions to stay in education as a career path? (Theme 5)

SRQ2a: Do race and gender influence the Black male teachers' perspective on the teaching profession? (Theme 4)

Theme 1: Perceived Barriers to Entry for Black Male Teachers. The current literature concentrates on the idea that Black men avoid education for various reasons, which include barriers such as administrative challenges, age, gender, and appearance (Villegas et al., 2012). Participants were asked questions about entry for Black male teachers and what barriers existed in the educational sector. They listed a wide range of obstacles, including discrimination with age, gender, visual appearance, sexuality, stereotypes, being the only Black educator, among other results (see Figure 2 in Chapter 4). The three main categories where participants felt the most impact was perceived barriers related to the public school system, administration, and various types of discrimination. These results resonated with the literature because studies have discussed these existing barriers for Black educators. For instance, it is essential to note that Garibaldi (1991) discussed that compensation was an obstacle for 78%, the absence of parental help was an obstruction for 66%, and the absence of understudy collaboration was a hindrance for 59% (also see Ford et al., 1997). The participants identified lack of compensation and absence of parental help as their barriers to entry and staying within the profession. Interestingly,

none of the participants directly mentioned the absence of understudy collaboration. Still, many expressed feeling lonely and isolated because they were the only Black male educator at their institution, as consistent with literature findings (Lynn, 2006). Consequently, these findings supported the literature findings that barriers exist in the education structure that deals directly with Black males. This gives further validity to the study, as I was able to replicate the results of other scholars.

The fact that the participants understood the existing barriers alluded to the fact that African American male teachers tend to teach in ways that attempt to end racial inequality, an idea that also supports the literature (Lynn, 2006). CRT mentions that Black men can relate to Black students, which provides practical and culturally relevant instruction in the classroom (Lynn, 2006). Thus, the participants in this study clearly understood the existing barriers and their perceptions offered ways to overcome them.

Administrative Challenges. The participants identified several factors they perceived as barriers to education from the school or administration levels. For instance, some participants found it challenging to be the only Black male educator in their school. The lack of integration and diversity can be detrimental to the Black students' learning environment (Bristol & Goings, 2019). The literature also discussed the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the systematic and deliberate practice of hindering the Black educator population in efforts to undermine the Court's decision (Johnson & McGowan, 2017). Given that the participants mentioned very few Black male educators are within the system supported the notion that significant changes still need to be implemented in the educational system. That said, it is not clear whether the lack of Black male educators is due to administrative decisions or decisions of the educators themselves.

Some participants highlighted additional barriers and challenges related to school administration, school environment, and parents. In addition, some participants felt that a lack of upward mobility in the school system was problematic within the profession. The lack of advancement potential might be because many Black teachers in public school systems have experienced a scarcity of resources. At the same time, hyper-segregation might also be a contributing factor (Oakley et al., 2009). Moreover, another factor that might be contributing to the lack of Black male teachers is that Black male teachers are leaving the profession and the retention rate is low (Jackson, 2015). While understanding the matriarchal constructs of education, examining the patriarchal constructs of advancement into the administrative side of education is essential. Jackson (2015) conducted a study with teachers of color, highlighting their understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy and their perspectives on their environment and curriculum. The conclusion of this study and the ongoing themes from these results emphasize how institutional policies and practices are incorporated into schools that oppress marginalized racial groups.

Discrimination. According to the participants, other barriers in the K-12 public education system were age discrimination, gender discrimination, visual appearance, academic discrimination, sexual discrimination, and racial discrimination. The current literature by analyst Fultz (1995) supported these results because of the ongoing hypothesis that dislodging turned into the stage that incorporated educational committees, school directors, and government officials to destroy the business and authority of African American school staff. The literature also supported the concept of racial discrimination because several White parents opposed having their children being taught by someone who was not White, thereby resulting in Black teachers becoming a minority in a school system that educates mostly Black students (Kohli,

2009). Thus, the results from the study confirmed that this barrier is still represented in school systems today.

The gender discrimination theme is not surprising as the literature also supported the idea that the population of Black women in education has received more benefits than men and has significant achievement and leadership in the field. Specifically, the literature mentioned that African American women have a greater capacity to transcend difficulties and expert objectives than African American men (Green, 2005). In addition, the literature has shown that Black women graduate from undergraduate and graduate schools at a higher degree than Black men, leading Black women to be more represented in postsecondary administration than Black men (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). This statistic in the literature might suggest that Black male educators are not as good as Black female educators. It is important to mention that, historically, Black female teachers were given roles and responsibilities in their families and communities (Collins, 1995). Education was also seen as protection and communal education for Black female teachers (Beachum & McCray, 2004). Notably, some of these constructs are not being met, as many of the participants expressed the notion of being daunted, at times, by the female presence in teacher and administrative meetings.

Visual discrimination was a novel result of this study, as the participants described it. Some participants were called gym teachers, substitute teachers, or maintenance staff. Furthermore, participants felt that their physical appearance led others to view them as less capable of teaching children. Participants also discussed the effects of academic discrimination, which is a person (colleague, parent, or community member) acting negatively toward the Black male teacher for reasons that can be described as a negative assumption of lack of intelligence, credentials, or qualifications to be an educator. Additionally, there was a mention of affirmative

action and its relation to Black male teachers not being up to par for the position. Thus, Black male teachers felt like people discriminate against the fact that they have different education standards because of affirmative action programs. In addition, participants might have felt as if the "affirmative action hiring" process indicates that a Black male educator is only hired to increase a diversity quota.

Reports have been made regarding systemic racial issues in the public school system, and private schools wish to contribute to transferability limitations. Chatterji (2020) mentioned that systemic racism in education is a root factor for several other inequities that Black students face. He also stated that inequitable access to mentoring, tutoring, and mental health services disproportionately fails Black students. In addition, reports have been made about systemic racism in private schools. For example, Pearson (2022) mentioned that when diverse teachers do not teach a child, this will "handicap their education" and contribute to systemic racism in the world.

The literature has mentioned that Black men experience income inequality, despite their class standings (Couch & Fairlie, 2010; Hamilton et al., 2011). Thus, this barrier can lead to the retention rate of Black male teachers. Moreover, the patterns show that secondary teachers, male educators, and African American educators are bound to leave teaching more than others (Ford et al., 1997). This study showed a unique perspective compared to the literature, focusing on factors that motivated Black male educators to stay within the profession instead of leaving it. This idea is discussed next in Themes 2 and 3.

Theme 2: Perceived Opportunities for Black Male Teachers When Entering the Education Profession. This theme focused on what the participants viewed as opportunities for those who are Black male educators. The participants identified opportunities available to Black

male educators according to four categories: (a) Black male educators are genuinely needed, (b) they have the opportunity to help children, (c) they have an opportunity to be father figures, and (d) they have an opportunity to help their communities. Some participants described the fact that Black male educators are genuinely needed. Congruent with the findings of this study, the literature mentioned statistics emphasizing how Black males feel a sense of "duty" to give back to those who need their leadership. Moreover, the data have shown that family members and experiences with past teachers have pushed those same Black male teachers to become future educators.

Another common response from most participants was that Black educators valued the opportunity to touch the lives of the children they served. This was also seen in the literature as Marvin Lynn mentioned Black male teachers found great promise in teaching students as a way to "correct social, political, and even economic barriers that prohibit African Americans from success" (Graham & Erwin, 2011). Moreover, the literature supported the themes of the study in which participants mentioned that African American male teachers tend to teach in an attempt to end racial inequality and Black male teachers are seen as role models specifically for Black male students. This may allow Black male teachers to reach Black male students who can relate differently (Lynn, 2006). Along with the theme of role models, some Black students can see Black male teachers as father figures. Several participants mentioned that touching the lives of young people meant they may serve as father figures for some of the children. The literature confirmed Richard Milner's five tenets of leadership that any individual teaching Black male students should follow. The principles include how teachers and students (a) envision life beyond their present situation, (b) understand self by coming to know themselves concerning others, (c) speak of possibility and not destruction, (d) care, and (e) change their thinking to change their

actions (Milner, 2007a, 2007b). Thus, these principles aligned with the themes of this study as they explain why Black male teachers would lead the charge for providing a balance for Black male students.

Along with the theme of role models, some Black students can see Black male teachers as father figures. Several participants mentioned that touching the lives of young people meant they may serve as father figures for some of the children. Some participants reported receiving Father's Day cards from previous students. In general, the participants cared about touching children's lives and viewed their roles as male father figures when necessary for the child. The literature supported Black representation in education as it improves the educational experience and academic achievement among Black students. Black male teachers are critical in serving as father figures in teaching positions and improving overall academic outcomes (Brockenbrough, 2014).

The literature also supported the notion that Black male teachers can often be seen as surrogate father figures in these students' lives. Brockenbrough's (2015) research mentioned that educational sectors see Black male teachers as filling the role of "other fathers." Black male teachers have a better understanding of cultural awareness and relatability to the needs of Black male students. In addition, the presence of a Black teacher creates a fostering environment and an opportunity for students to understand an academic setting. Thus, this safety net can be seen as a nurturing father figure role. Along with being father figures, Black teachers saw the education field as an opportunity to help their communities. Some Black teachers felt a strong responsibility could contribute to and aid in the education of students. Moreover, Black male teachers are expected to play an authoritative role whereby they can implement their dominant masculinity on the Black students in ways other teachers might not be able to (Brockenbrough,

2015). The literature supported the implicit belief that the Black male teacher has the specific persona needed to help Black male students (Brown, 2012).

Theme 3: Factors Influencing Black Men to Choose Teaching as a Profession.

Another theme in this study was understanding factors influencing Black men to enter the education field. Some participants mentioned rewards such as it was a family tradition and proactive work with kids (see Figure 4 in Chapter 4). The CRT framework gives a better understanding of minority teachers' experiences regarding the underrepresentation of minority K-12 teachers. CRT allows a researcher to explore through the lens of race, and this theory recognizes that the voices of minorities have been silenced (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Making a difference in a child's life tends to resonate with teachers and is often the main reason many men and women join the teaching ranks, regardless of gender and racial demographics. In his research, Brown (2012) mentioned that Black male teachers want to influence and help Black male students transition from young boys into young men. Additionally, Lewis's (2006) study of why African American male teachers chose to enter the teaching profession and the results included helping young people, obtaining a job, and contributing to humanity. Thus, these literature reviews were comparable to the results revealed in this study.

Research also suggested that Black teachers are more likely to have increased expectations for Black students and thereby tap into the lived experience, which is a role model effect. It is also noteworthy that the literature supported that African American male teachers work hard to help students attain their educational and career goals and be productive in society (Lewis, 2006). Thus, this responsibility serves as a guiding point to help Black teachers make connections between their local, national, racial, and cultural identities within the education system (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The literature and this study's results supported that teachers

were inspired by teachers of color who served as role models for them. Thus, Black students can help emulate Black educators (Miller & Endo, 2005; Villegas et al., 2012). Therefore, the results confirmed that African American male students would consider teaching because of the encouragement they received from their Black high school teachers (Bianco et al., 2011).

Theme 4: Influence of Race and Gender on Black Male Teachers' Perspectives on Being an Educator. This theme discussed the perceptions of Black male teachers regarding race and gender in the education field. Some participants talked about how gender was critical to being an educator and how challenging it was to be the only Black male educator in a community of educators; it was not necessarily that they felt awkward being a Black male, but rather just a male in a female-dominant field. The literature supported the concept of motherhood to education, which includes females in the Black community (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Research has also suggested that women fight the stereotype of society through education and feel as if they are ethically responsible students in development (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). Thus, this sense of moral obligation for women sets them apart when comparing them to their male counterparts.

Additionally, some participants interpreted the interview question to mean the harmful effects of race on being an educator; others interpreted the question to examine the positive impact of race on being an educator. However, most people discussed the positive aspects. The literature suggested that, overall, teachers feel like "institutional agents and gatekeepers" and thus can serve as change agents (Allen, 2015). Some participants were motivated to perfect their teaching craft, while others were excited to be a part of a team focused on helping children. The literature and the results from this study also supported that there is a reduction in graduation rates in the Black population that could be due to negative perceptions of the teaching profession

before leaving high school (Goings & Bianco, 2016). This may be because Black male students do not usually have a role model or positive influence to look up to. Notably, the literature discovered that Black males did not specifically want to enter the teaching profession because experiences in their high school made them feel gender microaggressions and feelings of being less masculine (Goings & Bianco, 2016). The literature and the results supported that these gender stereotypes of Black male teachers create a stigma that education is a career for women and men are more of disciplinarians and surrogate father figures who may not be suited as a teacher.

Theme 5: How Black Male Teachers' K-12 Experiences Informed Their Decision to Stay in Education. For this theme, the participants were reportedly motivated by personal goals, job security, enjoyment of teaching children, and positive collaboration with educators. While the literature showed that males may often shy away from career paths such as education because of the assumption of a lesser salary and an association with a female-dominated career path, some men are nonetheless very passionate about helping children learn. The literature supported that career choices between males and females are based on the options given and made in higher education. Moreover, distinctions in educational careers may stem from non-cognitive learner characteristics, such as discipline, motivation, time management skills, and goals (Severiens & Ten Dam, 2012). Some participants also expressed that education is a very stable field and offers job security, albeit with a lack of upward mobility. Most participants mentioned that working with children was the main reason that motivated their educational endeavors—entering and staying in the field of education.

Aside from job security, one of the main reasons Black male teachers chose to stay in the field of education was the rewarding nature of helping children and watching their growth and

development of the children. This driving factor seemed to outweigh all other barriers and microaggressions. In addition, another driving force in pursuing the educational field was to promote positivity and be role models for Black male students and students in general. This community-based thinking allowed Black male teachers to be leaders, whereas other professions might not have offered the opportunity. The results from this study concluded that the added integration and diversity within the classroom setting might allow for a better teaching and learning experience for everyone involved. The literature supported the need for educators to be aware of the racial foundations within the education framework, also called Critical Race Pedagogy, in which theorists provide analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender conflicts in education (Lynn, 2004). Relating this to the critical race studies in education confirmed that the involvement of diverse traditions in law, education, sociology, and ethnic studies can help to design a robust analysis of race and racism as social, political, and economic factors (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Limitations

Phenomenology research methods may have disadvantages with concerns of biases. The researcher's role is to bring upfront awareness of bias, beliefs, and values in the study. In this study, three participants only had 5 years of experience, while 10 participants with 10-30 years of experience. This study would have been more robust with a more extensive range of participants; that is, perfect research would include participants in the middle years of their careers. Thus, this study lacked perspectives of people in mid-career. However, this limitation was mitigated by the fact that 10 of the 13 participants have been in education for over 10 years, which allows for ample experience related to why educators stay in education.

The geographical constraints of only sampling in New Jersey also was a limitation. However, it should be noted that the participants represented 6 of 21 counties in New Jersey, suggesting that a wide range of districts and types of schools were sampled. While having a more prominent target population would be better for the generalizability of the sample to the larger population overall, I believe that data saturation was reached, suggesting the transferability of the data to the general population. Other limitations potentially included the truthfulness of the participants' responses. While I assumed that the participants were honest because of the voluntary nature of the study, it is possible that some participants may have chosen to limit their disclosure.

Implications for Future Practice

To enhance the experience, retention, and overall future of Black male teachers, we must implement strategies that reflect the value and richness of a diverse community. Advocacy centers for Black male teachers can help with foundational groundwork highlighting the importance of assisting Black male students, thereby encouraging education within the community. Educational programs that provide leadership opportunities may allow Black male students to engage in classroom management, decision making, and perspectives related to emotional and social health.

Some strategies may be used to help the retention rate of Black male teachers. One strategy is providing state funding for teachers who have put time and effort into the public school system. Funding programs may also assist with mentorship programs for younger male Black teachers where there are job placement opportunities, stipends, and mentorship to keep them within the educational sector. An overall improvement in school teaching conditions would also provide a better incentive for teacher retention. In addition, support from the school

principal regarding state-level accreditation and licensure standards can aid in more seamless transitions for young teachers.

Another strategy that could support the entry and retention of Black male educators is by diversity, equity, and inclusion programs into the professional development of the educators. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have been shown to impact race relations on school campuses positively (Milem et al., 2005). Including DEI programs in professional development programs may allow for the education of all education professionals, including Caucasian school leaders (Davis et al., 2020). As such, these initiatives may bring greater awareness to the need for DEI in education. It is my hope that inclusion of DEI initiatives in professional development programs will increase the recruitment and retention of Black male educators through the creation of inclusive employment environments. Additionally, such programs could serve to target the cultural gap that currently exists in the education system.

Summary

Chapter 5 discussed the underlying themes presented in Chapter 4 and analyzed how these themes related to the literature presented in Chapter 2. The goal of this study was to use interpretive phenomenological qualitative methods to understand better the underrepresentation of Black male educators. Importantly, the results suggested that Black males faced discriminatory barriers to entry into the K-12 education field. However, as with every other profession, there are real-world barriers to entry, including concerns over wages, job security, and lack of upward mobility. Despite the obstacles identified by these participants, the overwhelming majority of them described that they entered education and remained in education due to an honest desire to work with children and improve the lives of their communities. This suggested that Black male educators are service-oriented community leaders. These findings

further suggested that schools must work to increase the prevalence of Black male educators in the classroom. This study concluded with two avenues related to this future direction. First, Black male educators could work to educate and encourage young Black adolescents about the teaching profession; second, administrations should explore best practices to increase the diversity of their faculty as well as ensure that the Black male educators on staff can teach to the best of their abilities, thereby strengthening the education system and the community.

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Appendix A:

Interview Questions

1. Discuss why you became an educator.
2. Discuss why you decided to enter the educational system.
3. Describe what motivates you to stay within the educational system.
4. Discuss your perceived role and personal responsibilities as a Black male educator.
5. What expectations do you have for your students?
6. How do your expectations of students compare to those held by the administration?
7. Discuss your challenges as a Black male educator in New Jersey.
8. Are there additional challenges that you may not have faced, but that you are aware can happen to Black male educators in New Jersey?
9. Discuss what you believe would encourage Black men to become educators.
10. Describe how your personal experiences shape your ability to influence your students.
11. Describe how your emotions affect your teaching style.
12. Have you had moments where you considered leaving the teaching profession? If so, could you discuss the situation and what made you stay?

Appendix B:

IRB Approval

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
1 8 5 6

February 8th, 2022

Steven Lewis
Seton Hall University

Re: 2022-291

Dear Steven

At its January meeting, the Research Ethics Committee of the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your research proposal entitled, "Black Male Teachers and their Ability to Break Limitations" submitted. This memo serves as official notice of the aforementioned study's approval. Enclosed for your records are the stamped original Consent Form and recruitment flyer. You can make copies of these forms for your use.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol, informed consent form or study team must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You will receive a communication from the Institutional Review Board at least 1 month prior to your expiration date requesting that you submit an Annual Progress Report to keep the study active, or a Final Review of Human Subjects Research form to close the study. In all future correspondence with the Institutional Review Board, please reference the ID# listed above.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mara Podvey

Mara C. Podvey, PhD, OTR
Associate Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

Phyllis Hansell

Phyllis Hansell, EdD, RN, DNAP, FAAN
Professor
Co-Chair, Institutional Review Board

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