Spring 5-2021

Representation of African American/Black Men Educators in K-12 Public Schools: Impact on Recruitment, Retention, and Responsibilities to Education

TeKyesha Gault Anderson
Arkansas Tech University

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REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK MEN EDUCATORS IN
K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS: IMPACT ON RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND
RESPONSIBILITIES TO EDUCATION

A Dissertation Submitted
to the Graduate College
Arkansas Tech University

in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

in the Department of Leadership and Learning
of the College of Education

May 2021

TeKyesha Gault Anderson

Bachelor of Arts, University of Central Arkansas, 1998; Master of Science, University
of Arkansas Little Rock, 2006; Specialist of Education, Arkansas State University, 2008

Dissertation Approval

This dissertation, "Representation of African American/Black Men Educators in K-12 Public Schools: Impact on Recruitment, Retention, and Responsibilities to Education," by TeKyesha Gault Anderson, is approved by:

Dissertation Chair: _____

Sarah Gordon
Associate Professor
Center for Leadership and Learning

Dissertation Committee   _____

John Freeman
Professor & Program Director
Center for Leadership and Learning

_____

Nancy Gallivan
Professor of Teacher Education

Program Director: _____

John Freeman
Professor & Program Director
Center for Leadership and Learning

Graduate College Dean: _____

Richard Schoephoerster Dean, Graduate College

Permission

Title: Representation of African American/Black Men Educators in K-12 Public Schools: Impact on Recruitment, Retention, and Responsibilities to Education

Program: Educational Leadership

Degree: Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Almost seven decades after the Supreme Court's *1954 Brown v Board of Education* decision, African American/Black men are still vastly underrepresented in the K-12 public education profession. For this qualitative, phenomenological research study, a small sample of this demographic of educators, who chose to enter and remain in the profession, shared their lived experiences. Three research questions informed this study: (1) What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession? (2) What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education profession? and (3)What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education profession? The lived experiences of these Black men before and during their tenure as educators in Arkansas public schools reveal their perceptions regarding their demographic's recruitment, retention, and responsibilities to education. This research study has three key findings: (a) Black men are discouraged from entering elementary education; (b) The way the desegregation of schools was implemented had a negative impact on equitable representation, Black educators, and all students; and (c) The Black man educator is often seen as a disciplinarian, but his lived experiences and descriptions show that he is more of a sentimentalist. Findings also reveal that Black men often suffer isolation in schools among their colleagues and sometimes they are used as tokens rather than valued members of the faculty. This research can be useful to K-12 public school districts to resolve issues involving the disparity of discipline practices among races of students as well as the relegation of the Black man educator to disciplinarian. Colleges of Education can also use the research findings to aid in the development of much needed courses regarding equity, representation, cultural awareness, and the history of Black Education. *Keywords:* equity, representation, underrepresentation, discipline practices, tokenism, Black educators, desegregation, elementary education, retention, recruitment, responsibilities, disparity, integration, identity development, nigrescence

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Chapter I: Introduction

As an introduction to the research of the representation of African American men educators in K-12 public education, this section includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, key definitions, significance of the study, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and organization of the study.

Background of the Problem

Despite the need for more African American men educators in K-12 public schools, African American men are choosing different careers paths (Villegas & Lucas, 2004). This problem has negatively impacted the educational experiences of all students because all students—especially African American boys—are missing the opportunity to learn from, experience, and emulate the eminence of African American men during their formative years of education (Villegas & Lucas, 2004). A phenomenological research study which investigates the human experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) of African American men teachers and African American men who have chosen different professions may help contribute to an understanding of their current representation in the K-12 teaching profession.

Historically, Black men have contributed substantially to society in areas that require considerable intelligence, innovation, and ingenuity (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). Eminent Black men of the present and the past have been responsible for contributions that have critically changed the way of life for individuals and societies around the world (Abdul-Jabbar & Steinberg, 1996). In the areas of science and invention, Lewis Latimer, a Black man, created long-lasting lightbulbs (Abdul-Jabbar & Steinberg, 1996). In the area of agriculture George Washington Carver, a Black man, developed a means to

prevent soil depletion (Salley, 1993); in the area of technology and medicine, Otis Boykin, a Black man, developed IBM computers and the science behind the latest advancement in pacemakers. In the areas of biology and education, Ernest Everett Just, pioneered the physiology of development (Selassie, 2007).

Black men are highly intelligent thinkers who have the capacity to change any field in which they are involved, and history has shown that regardless of a lack of formal education, freedom, or oppression, Black men have found ways to impact society in a positive and pervasive way (Perry et al., 2003). Prior to the detrimental effects that desegregation and integration had on the representation of Black men in the education profession (Mill, 2019), Black men were prevalent and influential educators for Black youth in America.

Statement of the Problem

Before desegregation of schools in the United States, Black people were impactful educators, but institutional racism in the public school system did not allow for equitable teaching positions for Black people, leaving them to pursue other careers (Kozol, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006). As a result of being vilified and devalued as suitable educators for White students (Franklin, 1980), Black men pursued other careers at a greater rate than Black women (Goldhaber, Theobald, & Tien, 2018). Close to seven decades have transpired since the Supreme Court's Brown v. Topeka Board of Education decision to desegregate the public schools, but Black men still have a low representation in the public education profession. With such grand talents to offer to all students, one may question why they are not seeking to enter the teacher education profession at much higher rates. It is within the teaching profession that Black men can have a significant and

lasting influence in the lives of K-12 students (Goldhaber et al., 2018; Villegas, Strom & Lucas, 2012).

Public education needs more Black men teachers to be mentors and encouraging models in the lives of students of *all* backgrounds, creeds, and nationalities (Villegas et al., 2012). Having more Black men teachers could potentially dispel myths that have been perpetuated by the government, society, propaganda, racism, and xenophobia that often seep into the psyche of our students, causing them to fear Black men rather than seeing them for the value that they have and can contribute (Villegas et al., 2012). In addition, Black men, of course, have incomparable influence on *Black* youth. Black students in K-12 education have very few Black teachers, and in many schools across the country, Black students can go through their entire education without having the experience of learning from a single Black teacher (Villegas et al., 2012). The odds of having a Black *man* as a teacher are even lower (Villegas et al., 2012). Because Black men are not pursuing careers in K-12 public education at higher rates, more research is needed to understand Black men's perspectives on their recruitment, retention, and responsibilities to education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is: (a) to determine from the voices of African American men if they consider themselves to be underrepresented in the K-12 public education teaching profession, (b) to reveal how the lived experiences of African American men affect their entrance, retention, and responsibilities in the K-12 public education teaching profession, and (c) to determine from the perspectives of African American men how they can be recruited and retained in the K-12 public education profession. This data will

come directly from Black men educators as they share their lived experiences. Considering the virtual exclusion of Black men from key positions as educators during the desegregation and integration era, this study will seek to understand from Black men why more Black men do not currently join the education profession. The study will be guided by Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) theory, which will allow exploration into whether Black men see themselves as educators to students of *all* backgrounds.

Key Definitions

For the purposes of this research study, key terms are defined as follows:

- **African American, Black, Black American, African in America**: used to refer to people who are descendants of enslaved Africans of Hebraic descent in the United States of America. In the Review of Literature, *enslaved African* is used to reflect this people's identity prior to their emancipation. *Africans in America* is used to reflect their identity for the period after emancipation but prior to them gaining citizenship status. After being assigned American citizenship, *African American, Black,* and *Black American* are used interchangeably to refer to people who are descendants of enslaved Africans of Hebraic descent.

- **Blackness:** the quality of being of African descent and the degree to which one may embrace the associated culture.

- **Black Racial Identity Development (BRID)**: a theoretical framework asserting that there is a psychological process that one goes through in order to identify as Black (Helms, 1994).

- **European American, of European descent**, **White**: used interchangeably to refer to Americans of European ancestry.

- **K-12 public education**: American institution providing a free schooling to youth.

- **Lived experiences**: those happenings in life that impact one's actions and choices.

- **Nigrescence**: term popularized by William Cross (1971) to describe the stages Negro people or people of African descent undergo to accept the Black racial identity assigned to them by American politics.

- **Representation**: the presence and participation of a demographic in an organization or program (e.g., teaching profession).

- **Retention**: the act of teachers remaining in the teaching profession for more than ten years.

- **Teaching profession**: career field responsible for the education and learning of young people particularly in K-12 public education.

- **Underrepresentation**: insignificant or inadequate representation of a demographic in and organization or program (e.g., teaching profession).

Significance of Study

This study about the representation of Black men will offer insight into some reasons for the representation of African American men in the K-12 public education profession. The data and conclusions of this study will impact the education profession by pointing to solutions to provide African American and other student populations with African American men teachers who can positively affect their learning and achievement. This

study will also offer valuable data that can be used to determine recruitment and retention strategies of African American men teachers in K-12 public education.

Departments of Education, K-12 public school districts and their communities, families, and students will benefit from the information gained in this study. African American men teachers have the potential to make tremendous change in underperforming schools and with underachieving African American boys who have not, in many cases, had the benefit of having African American men teachers as an embodied example of what Black men can achieve in education. In addition, there is an added benefit of Black students having Black male teachers who understand them culturally and who have insight about the intricacies of behavior that teachers of European descent sometimes deem as behavior issues.

The researcher intends this study to help in understanding the history of Black men in education. The researcher hopes to add to the trend of information aiding in the recruitment and retention of Black men to the education profession. The study could offer reasons Black men have a low representation in education as well as ways to recruit them. The men will have different experience levels, so this gives the opportunity to get varying levels of insight into their lived experiences. Because the researcher will use the constant comparative technique, (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001) as described in the methodology chapter, common themes will emerge from the participants' data. Identifying these themes can offer insight into recruitment strategies for other Black men to enter and stay in the profession. Since this study focuses on the phenomenon (Patton, 2015) of the Black man's experiences, it is hoped that the study will also provide strategies for

increasing motivation in Black boys, positively impacting their affective needs, self-worth, academic achievement, and discipline.

This study will offer insight into some reasons for the representation of Black men in the teaching profession. The data and conclusions of this study will impact the education profession by pointing to solutions to provide Black student populations (and all students) with Black men as teachers who can positively affect their learning and achievement. This study will also offer valuable data that can be used to determine recruitment and retention strategies of Black men teachers in K-12 public education. The data and conclusions of this study will impact the education profession by pointing to solutions to provide African American student populations with African American men teachers who can positively affect their learning and achievement. This study will offer valuable data that can be used to determine recruitment and retention strategies of African American men teachers in K-12 public education.

Assumptions

The researcher of this study assumes that the African American men who are interviewed will candidly share their lived experiences. The researcher also assumes that African American men will identify as African American or Black if they are descendants of African slaves in America. Another assumption is that African American men display a psychological self-identity as supported by the theory of Black Racial Identity Development (Cross, 1991). The researcher assumes that mankind's invention of race is a dominating factor in the lives of African Americans, causing them to become aware of race when choosing a career. Cross's BRID theory justifies this assumption by maintaining that African Americans progress through a series of Black identity stages

(Cross, 1991). According to the Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) theory, Black people may that they prefer situations including professions where they are associating with other predominantly Black people (Cross, 1991). Regarding Black men as teachers, they may feel that are inadequate in taking on the task of educating White youth or youth of any other diverse background. This may be a result of the way they feel society views them. The men may feel that they relate more to other African American teachers than to teachers of European descent (Cross, 1991).

Another assumption is that African American men, in particular, have unique cultural and societal experiences that affect the way they view themselves and their place in society. The researcher assumes that African American men do not see themselves becoming teachers because many of them have not had any African American men teachers to emulate (Bristol & Mentor, 2018).

Delimitations

A few delimitations apply to this study. One delimitation is that participants will be African American adult men who are college graduates and residents of Arkansas. Only African American men will be surveyed. This study will explore the lived experiences of a small sample of African American men in the state of Arkansas. Another delimitation is that the research will not include African American men who are educators at private schools. Only African American men who are educators in K-12 public schools will be included.

Limitations

Due to the participant sample being limited to include only Black, college-educated men from Arkansas, findings may be specific to this demographic region

and may also be specific to the age and common characteristics of the participants.

However, the findings may be transferable to Black men in other regions, locations, and

circumstances.

Organization of the Study

Within Chapter One, the researcher introduced and provided background for the

study. Additionally, Chapter One laid out the purpose of the study, its significance,

research questions, definitions of terms, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the

study. Chapter Two contains the theoretical framework for this study along with a

detailed review of the literature relating to the history education disenfranchisement and

representation of Black people in the education profession.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of the study is: (a) to understand the perceptions Black men have about their representation in the K-12 public education profession, (b) to describe how the lived experiences of Black men affect their entrance into, their retention in, and their responsibilities to the K-12 public education profession, and (c) to discover perspectives Black men have regarding the necessity for their recruitment and retention in the K-12 public education profession and consequent ways to do so. This qualitative research study will be conducted with these guiding research questions:

1. What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?

2. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?

3. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

This literature review seeks to highlight the following topics: (a) the history of Black education; (b) the history of integration in the US and its effect on the representation of African American teachers; (c) the racial disparity among teachers in US K-12 public schools; (d) Black educator experiences in K-12 public schools; (e) the Black Racial Identity Development theory as the theoretical framework for this study. The literature was selected and reviewed because of its relationship to the history of Black education and other factors that influence the impact on the representation of Black

men in education. This literature reveals the evolution of Black men's representation as educators in the US public school system.

The research in this literature review will also point to some existing explorations on the topic, but since the literature focusing solely on the Black man's representation is K-12 public education is limited, this literature review also offers examinations of the broader subject of the representation of Black educators. Through this literature review, the reader will gain a better grasp of the reasons for the low representation of Black men educators in K-12 schools.

History of Education for African Americans

Historically in the United States of America, access to education, equity in education, and quality education have been either nonexistent or elusive for the Black American. This section is important to understand the history that may contribute to the current representation of Black men in the education profession.

Education during early colonization (1415-1619). For ages before Europeans colonized the African continent and even before Europeans abducted and enslaved its inhabitants, education on the continent both existed and thrived in its many countries and societies (Mosweunyane, 2013). Education is defined as those things that prepare youth to be a productive part of society based on the values and norms of that society (Mosweunyane, 2013). Vast research has shown that before colonialism, the many cultures in Africa had instituted education that was both formal and informal for the purpose of imparting knowledge to their young people (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). Mosweunyane (2013) explains that the teacher in African society became an accredited teacher as a result of having extensive experience. The teacher, whether a man or a

woman, was chosen and valued by the community for his or her wisdom and experience and held in high regard for the ability to educate the youth (Mosweunyane, 2013).

Walter Rodney (as cited in Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019) proclaims that colonizers should not be credited with the introduction of education into Africa because education systems were already in place; colonizers introduced their formal education institutions that in many ways replaced what African societies had established (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). Christian missionaries used religious conversion to take control of the land, the people, and the education systems (Mosweunyane, 2013). The values and traditions of the African cultures did not require such an intrusion and more pointedly, they did not require such and intrusion into their educational structure (Mosweunyane, 2013). The education systems of African people were discounted during colonialism, but when they were taken into American slavery, formal education of African youth and adults for that matter was abolished.

Education during American slavery (1619-1863). During slavery in America, the education of the enslaved African was forbidden (Williams, 2005). There was no access to formal education for the enslaved African but learning to read English was symbolic of hope and freedom for the enslaved (Williams, 2005). These African people had a rich history of education that they valued on their own continent, and they had hope that attaining the education of their oppressors could offer even a finite degree of power that could possibly lead them to freedom (Williams, 2005). Many slaveholders did not want enslaved Africans to be educated because they knew that this form of enlightenment would (a) make them yearn for liberation and (b) humanize them (Woodson, 1919). As a result, the slaveholders did all they could to prevent education of the enslaved African

(Williams, 2005). With the elimination of education, the slaveholder sought to (a) make the African docile, (b) perpetuate that the African is an uncivilized creature, (c) validate perpetual slavery, and (d) validate their unrelenting cruelty to the African people (Woodson, 1919). Other slaveholders saw the benefit of educating the enslaved African. In his book, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861*, Carter G. Woodson (1919) asserts that each slaveholder dealt with this education situation "to suit himself, regardless of public opinion" (p. 3). Essentially, education was afforded to the enslaved African for either one of these three reasons: (1) some slaveholders wanted educated slaves in order to increase economic efficiency of their labor supply; (2) sympathetic people wanted to help the oppressed; (3) Christians wanted the enslaved Africans to learn the tenets of their religion (Woodson, 1919).

The formal and informal education practices of the enslaved African, of course, had to be what Gundaker (2007) called *hidden,* as laws were increasingly passed from state to state rendering the education of enslaved Africans illegal. Catholic and Christian clergy were the first formal educators of the enslaved and free African during the period prior to the abolition of slavery as an American institution (Woodson, 1919). Unfortunately, this Christian education instructed the Africans to be agreeable to their lesser status, to appreciate Christianity as being sovereign (Woodson, 1919; Jones, 2020), and to forget anything about their Hebrew origins (Fortson, 2018; Equiano, 2005; Jones, 2020). The Quakers, however, were the first to enter a protest (in 1688) against slavery by the Protestants in America; they were also the first to develop schools dedicated to providing meaningful education to people of African descent (Woodson, 1919). In opposition to the Puritans and the Christian missionaries, the Quakers set out to show that the enslaved African was capable of

intellectual thought, that slavery was immoral, and that goodwill should be meant for and to all men not excluding the African in America (Woodson, 1919). Quakers believed that all men are brothers, are equal in the eyes of God, and should be equal under the law (Woodson, 1919). As a result, they were dedicated to the instruction of who Woodson (1919) called the American Negro. Leading Quakers of the period such as George Keith, George Fox, and William Penn advocated for the education and emancipation of the American Negro (Woodson, 1919). By 1789, the Quakers had established several schools and the Society for the Free Instruction of the Orderly Blacks and People of Color (Woodson, 1919). This organization and the schools of the Abolition Society were instrumental in providing useful education to people of African descent (Woodson, 1919). During this period, Quakers and abolitionists, including freed Africans faced societal persecution to be teachers at these schools (Williams, 2005). By the 1800s, Sabbath schools or schools sponsored by churches began to meet on the weekends and at night to provide elementary and secondary levels of education to the African in America (Williams, 2005). Notably, Frederick Douglass, a freed African and noted abolitionist, established a Sabbath school that offered enslaved Africans instruction in reading and writing. As Africans in America became increasingly educated, they in turn, risked their lives to teach their people (Williams, 2005). Charles Colcock Jones published *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States* in 1842, explaining how the Christian religion is necessary to keep the Negro inferior (Jones, 2020).

Little by little freed and self-liberated Africans in America developed the skill to help themselves (Woodson, 1919). As a result, by 1804, they founded a society of their own and opened a school (Woodson, 1919). In addition, African Episcopalians, taking notes from the aid of missionaries, opened a school for those of African descent at their church

(Woodson, 2019). An African man in America donated 300 pounds toward the building of a school in Philadelphia (Woodson, 2019). Free Africans with the means became philanthropists, donating to the cause of building schools for the education of Africans in America (Woodson, 1919). By 1830, Africans in Philadelphia funded, developed, and sent their children to their own private and public schools in that city (Woodson, 1919). Northern Americans and even Europeans became increasingly impressed with the tremendous efforts of the Africans in America to educate their own people and began charitably giving to the cause (Woodson, 1919). Woodson (1919) proclaims that the greatest achievement of the Africans in America was the devotion they had in taking extreme care to produce teachers who were qualified to teach and edify their treasured youth.

Woodson (1919) goes on to declare the continued success of these schools and that by 1849, that success was published in a document called the "Statistical Inquiry into the Condition of Colored People in and about Philadelphia." Children of African descent no matter their economic status were being educated in thriving schools by teachers, men and women, of African descent (Woodson, 1919; Williams, 2005). As conditions for Africans in the South--both enslaved and free--became increasingly unbearable and cruel, they flocked to Philadelphia for opportunities and education (Woodson, 1919). By 1859 in Philadelphia, there were 1,031 students of African descent in public schools, 748 in "charity schools," 211 in "benevolent schools," and 331 in "private schools," for a total of 2,321 children of African descent all being educated by an overwhelming majority of teachers of African descent (Woodson, 1919, p. 147).

It should also be noted as Woodson (1919) explains that there was a continued and great opposition by southerners to the education of Africans, enslaved and free. This was especially true with the beginning of the industrial revolution (1760-1840) because slaves who were once advertised as valuable because of their educational "enlightenment" were now considered a liability for the same reason (Woodson, 1919). Close to the beginning of the events leading to the Civil War, those slaves who were not allowed an education were also considered a liability because of their growing discontent and insurrection (Woodson, 1919). As a result, conditions for the enslaved became increasingly cruel, and education for the enslaved became increasingly inaccessible (Woodson, 1919). One can understand why the African in America would dream of Philadelphia as a place of hope in the power of education. However, that hope was in many ways dashed for Africans in America after the end of the Civil War in 1865, when America began to reconstruct itself.

Education during Reconstruction and Jim Crow era (1865-1968). America's Reconstruction era is noted as that time from 1865, after the Civil War ended, to 1877, when the country was charged with the task of fixing the social, political, and economic injustices and inequities that slavery caused for the African in America (Gates, 2019). It was also a period where the country addressed the great task and associated problems of readmitting the 11 states that seceded from the Union (Gates, 2019).

It should be noted that for the first two years of Reconstruction the African man in America did not have the vote, and the South in no way automatically began to view him as an equal (Franklin, 1979). White Southern men led state governments and passed laws to make sure the Black man knew he was to remain socially and economically inferior

(Franklin, 1979). In the meantime, there is no evidence supporting claims and film portrayals of the Black man as seeking revenge or enacting vicious acts towards White people (Franklin, 1979). Many even continued to work peacefully for their slave owners, concerned only with seeking ways to make their lives as free men more advantageous (Franklin, 1979).

In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued to free enslaved Africans and authorized them to enlist with Union troops. In 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau was established to provide assistance to freed Africans, only to be abolished seven years later (Williams, 2007). During those years, however, Freedman schools were established (Williams, 2007). The newly freed Africans hoped that education and literacy could improve their lives in America (Williams, 2007).

The Civil War ended on April 8, 1865, and on December 6, 1865, the 13th Amendment was ratified, abolishing slavery in the United States (except for being convicted of a crime (Gates, 2019). During this period of reconstruction, in 1868 the United States passed the 14th Amendment, *guaranteeing* equal protection and due process under the law to all African Americans (Gates, 2019). In retaliation, Southern states still loyal to the Confederacy passed what was known as Black Codes, or laws to restrict the rights of Africans in America and legalized racial segregation (Gates, 2019). The Black Codes came to be known as Jim Crow laws because Jim Crow was the name of a blackface minstrel show character. The purpose of Jim Crow was partly to (a) redeem the Confederacy; (b) perpetuate the marginalization of African Americans; (c) deny African Americans the right to vote; (d) prevent African Americans from getting jobs (e) prevent African Americans from getting quality education. African Americans who

broke Jim Crow laws suffered consequences such as persecution, public ridicule, arrest, fines, jail time, torture, and murder. These laws and treatment continued from the institution of the Black Codes in 1865 through 1968, over 100 years.

On April 9, 1866, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 gave citizenship to African Americans and *guaranteed* equal rights (Gates, 2019). Less than a month later, what was called the Memphis *Race Riot* occurred, where Southern White private citizens and police officers murdered 46 African Americans, destroyed 90 houses belonging to African Americans, several African American schools, and four African American churches (Gates, 2019). In July of 1866, a similar event occurred in New Orleans where 40 African American and European American Republicans were murdered and more than 150 injured (Gates, 2019). In addition, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was formed in the southern state of Tennessee to terrorize African Americans and reaffirm White supremacy in the South (Gates, 2019). Such massacres and the KKK threatened the stability of African American schools (Gates, 2019).

In 1870, Hiram Revels from Mississippi was the first African American elected to the US Senate (Gates, 2019). That same year, the 15th Amendment was ratified, giving the right to vote to men regardless of race and regardless of whether they had once been enslaved (Gates, 2019). In 1869, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia voted out all the African (Black) American and European (White) American Republicans and voted in all European (White) American Democrats. This action was more proof the South was not on board with reconstruction (Gates, 2019).

In 1871, the following African American men were elected to the US House of Representatives: Benjamin Turner of Alabama, Josiah Walls of Florida, Robert Elliot,

Joseph Rainey, and Robert DeLarge of South Carolina. In 1872, Southerners still loyal to the Confederacy became increasingly angry; voter suppression, systemic lynching, church burnings, school burnings, and other acts of terrorism by Southern Christian private citizens, KKK, and the police, became more and more widespread in the South (Gates, 2019). In 1872, the Freedmen's Bureau was abolished. Later that year, P. B. S. Pinchback became the first African American man to act as governor of Louisiana, but because of White resistance, he only served for 13 months. In 1876, Republicans challenged the voting validity for President in Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina, and won, but Rutherford B. Hayes of the Free Soil Party was elected the 19th President of the US. Hayes was an abolitionist and was a lawyer who defended refugee slaves in court, but in an effort to appease the South, he removed federal troops from the South who were there protecting the rights of African Americans, indicating the end of Reconstruction (Gates, 2019).

According to Butchart (1980), Northern abolitionists, pointedly the teachers and Christian missionaries, continued to show concern for the African in America throughout the period of Reconstruction. They also endured vilification for their efforts from White people not only those from the South, but from the North as well (Butchart, 1980). However, as a result of social studies from that period, historians report just as Carter G. Woodson did in 1919, report that middle class Northern White people who led efforts to teach enslaved and freed Africans only did so to deal with what they called the Negro *problem (*Butchart, 1980). These Northerners used Christianity to shape the Africans in America into meek and subservient people that would ease their conscience while also

making them feel more comfortable having Africans in their country and around their families (Butchart, 1980).

Butchart (1980) describes these efforts were to make this *Negro problem* go away by using Christian education to make sure there is nothing that distinguishes the culture of the African in American from the acceptable American culture. Butchart (1980) even asserts that these Northern Christians used education to undermine and to have control over the liberation of Southern Black people during this period of America's reconstruction (Butchart, 1980). Conversely, it was also during Reconstruction that the African American formed free public schools in the South that were widely effective even though they were now, as freed men and women, actively paying taxes for public schools that their children were not allowed to attend (Woodson, 1919). These men and women were finally in charge of educating their own and their efforts were successful (Woodson, 1919) until the cruel interference of the KKK, the police, and other White Supremacy efforts (Butchart, 1980). African American teachers at these schools continued to teach, but not without the constant threat of racist attacks in the name of the Confederacy.

Higher education for the African American. Facing laws forbidding them from attending public school in the US, African Americans continued to fight for education. Even in the face of Jim Crow laws and its consequences, African Americans continued. After Andrew Johnson became President following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, his plan for US Reconstruction denied funding for public education for African Americans (Du Bois, 1969). W. E. B. Du Bois (1969) asserted that President Johnson believed that education was only necessary for the frivolous things that life

offers, and as a result was useless for the simple peon as the African American. Du Bois (1969) makes the point that Southern education after the Civil War was uncertain for the African American. Many schools including the missionary schools and Freedman Bureau schools were just the beginning and were struggling to become complete school systems (Du Bois, 1969). Despite acts of terror, African Americans continued to train their own teachers and build schools across the North and even the Jim Crow South (Williams, 2005).

With the rise in training of African American teachers through normal schools, which were developed for sole purpose of training teachers, came the need for African Americans to have their own institutions of higher education through which they could belong; yet Negro colleges were enthusiastically founded too hastily and were ultimately inadequate as a result (Du Bois, 1969). Franklin (1980) discusses the importance of the National Land-Grant Colleges Act of 1862 where land deeds were given for the building of colleges and universities the purpose of public higher education; these funds were easily accessible to White Americans, and colleges and universities began forming all over the country. Black Americans, however, did not benefit from this act until the Second Morrill Act of 1890 was implemented. This gave the Freedmen's Bureau the opportunity to begin Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Franklin, 1980; Freeman, 2009). HBCUs that expand throughout the United States, offering higher education to freed descendants of enslaved Africans (Franklin, 1980; LeMelle, 2002).

Segregation was fully in effect in the South; this segregation, of course, included institutions of higher education. In 1896, the United States Supreme Court heard the case of Plessy v. Ferguson. The Court's decision was that separate but equal schools for

Black Americans was right by law. HBCUs continued to expand as a result (Franklin, 1980; Freeman, 2009) and it became even more apparent that if the "Negro was to learn, he must teach himself" (Dubois, 1969, p. 128). The African American was already accustomed to training teachers through Normal schools. Du Bois (1969) claims that in just one generation African Americans were able to place over 30,000 African American teachers in the South as well as end illiteracy for the masses of Black people in the South.

HBCUs offered great training for teachers and leaders and gave African Americans the opportunity to study human culture and to build high ideals about life (Du Bois, 1969). HBCUs like Fisk University was established in 1871. Spelman Seminary was established in 1896. The HBCUs that began to fill New England were like gifts from New England to the African American (Du Bois, 1969). All the HBCUs then and in the years to come brought the best practices for teaching and training the African American teacher to teach African Americans (Du Bois, 1969; Freeman, 2009). Du Bois (1969) believed that it was not enough for those who would be responsible for the education of African Americans to be trained in the "technical normal methods; they must also, so far as possible be broad-minded, cultured men and women, to scatter civilization among a people whose ignorance was not simply of letters, but of life itself" (p. 129). If HBCUs and Negro schools had never come into existence, Du Bois asserts with surety that the "Negro would to all intents and purposes, have been driven back to slavery" (Du Bois, 1969).

Desegregation and Integration of Schools

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court made a ruling on the *Brown versus the Topeka Board of Education* case. The Court ruled unanimously that segregation based on

race was unconstitutional. Civil rights leaders celebrated the decision and many looked forward to even more improvement or advancement in the education of African Americans. However, Lutz (2017) asserts that even though the Brown ruling mandated that diverse races of students have access to equal education, the substandard, ineffective ways in which integration was implemented were not conducive to that effort. The pushback and hostile response to integration were pervasive (Lutz, 2017) and led to negative issues for so many African American students and African American teachers as well (Will, 2019). The vast amount of exemplar teachers and mentors that African American students lost as a result of desegregation had lasting effects, such as a loss in appreciation and even awareness of their own community and their cultural identity (Lutz, 2017).

Because so many African American teachers and administrators were left unemployed in the school system, African American students and families lost their voice in policies affecting them (Will, 2019; Lutz, 2017; Millner, 2006). The respected teachers of the African American community were once again, as indicative of the history of education, left without employment and the access to the African American students who need them to thrive (Lutz, 2017; Millner, 2006; Will, 2019). These African American teachers lost the careers for which they had trained and their talents went without (Lutz, 2017). More than 38,000 African American teachers throughout the Southern states no longer had teaching positions as a result the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court ruling (Lutz, 2017). African American teachers only represented a very tiny portion of teaching profession after that ruling (Lutz, 2017; Mill, 2020). African American men were even a fraction of that number, as there was

especially a historical distrust and fear for the Black man, fueled by

propaganda (Franklin, 1979).

Will (2019) reports the choice by schools to dismiss Black teachers in favor of

employing a White majority of teachers. Black schools were closed and their certified

Black teacher were left unemployed (Will, 2019). Court documents of Black teachers

who fruitlessly sued for their teaching positions revealed that many White teachers had

less teaching experience and less college education than the dismissed Black teachers

(Will, 2019). Such racial disparity continued for decades after the Brown decision.

The Rise in Racial Disparity Among Educators

Madeline Will (2019) published an article entitled, "65 Years after *Brown v. Board*:

Where are all the Black Educators?" Will (2019) questioned the positive impact that the

Brown decision had on education. She describes what she called an "unintended

consequence" of the monumental court ruling (Will, 2019). Will asserts that many highly

qualified, effective Black educators at segregated schools for Black students lost their

careers as a result of mandatory termination of positions (Will, 2019). Black educators

were forced out of positions by the tens of thousands (Will, 2019). Forced to integrate

schools, White administrators refused to put Black administrators and teachers in charge

of White teachers and White students (Will, 2019). This elimination of valuable Black

educators continues to impact the racial disparity among teachers today (Will, 2019).

Goldhaber, Krie, and Theobald (2014) found that 91% of all Arkansas teachers are

of European descent (White); 20% of students are African American, but African

American *teachers* make up only 7% of the teaching profession. Only 62% of Arkansas

students are European Americans, and over 91% of Arkansas teachers are of European descent (Goldhaber et al., 2018).

Nationwide, only 2% of the country's more than 3 million teachers are Black men (Arcia, 2006). As a result, African American students all over the US are not given the opportunity to experience learning from African American teachers even though the achievement gap is narrowed, engagement is heightened, and high achievement is accomplished when students have teachers who are "racially" and culturally similar to them (Arcia, 2006; Casteel, 1998; Goldhaber et al., 2014; Perry et al., 2003).

In addition, Arcia (2006) found that culturally diverse students are disciplined by White teachers at a much higher rate than White students are disciplined (Arcia, 2006). This finding reveals a gap in the training necessary for teachers to meet the needs of all students and to prevent adversely affecting the students they serve. Casteel (1998) found that African American students do not receive equitable feedback and praise from White teachers.

The teaching profession is growing, but there is still a huge racial/cultural disparity among teachers (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012). Frankenberg (2006) revealed that even though White teachers make up the vast majority of teachers in the US, they are also the group that has little to no experience with racially and culturally diverse populations. Furthermore, White teachers tend to have attended predominantly (over 90%) White elementary schools themselves, and they tend to become teachers at predominantly White schools where the faculty is also 90% White.

Frankenberg (2006) also discusses that there is an isolation that happens in education because African American teachers also tend to teach in predominantly culturally diverse

schools with predominantly African American faculty. In effect, Frankenberg (2006) identifies this isolation of teachers as the segregation of American teachers. It is to be noted that in such schools, the students are also receiving a segregated education.

Villegas, Strom, and Lucas (2012) discuss that after desegregation, the US Department of Education conducted a study in 1972. The agency gathered demographic data from desegregated schools across the country. African American students made up 22% of enrollment and African American teachers made up 12% of the faculty (Villegas et al., 2012). Ten years later, the disparity became much greater (Villegas et al., 2012). African American students made up 27% of enrollment and African American teachers made up just 10% of the faculty (Villegas et al., 2012).

This disparity with African American students and teachers caused a huge cultural gap (Villegas et al., 2012). Ultimately, African American teachers continued to lose their positions (Villegas et al., 2012). African American students—in many instances— lost their comfort and confidence in the classroom (Villegas et al., 2012). They were increasingly taught by White teachers who did not know how to or perhaps care to meet the needs of Black students (Villegas et al., 2012). The decline in African American teachers led to recruitment efforts by the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession and the National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education (Villegas et al., 2012).

Will (2019) describes the impact of the low representation of Black educators, especially Black men, (Milner, 2006) in public schools as a lasting one. The *Brown* decision hurt the development of Black youth (Will, 2019; Milner, 2006). Black youth no longer had the benefit of learning from bright, well-trained, well-educated leaders in

their community cared about their success and well-being in this country (Will, 2019; Milner, 2006). The legacy of what Black teachers offered is apparent and spoken fondly of by Black people who were fortunate to have been educated before the 1954 Brown decision or before it was completely enforced by the mid-1970s (Will, 2019). Will (2019) reports that one such student speaks of her segregated experience in Black classrooms as a place where they were taught such things as (a) to be productive members of society (b) to believe in themselves as quality human beings (c) to value education (d) to participate in democracy (e) to have aspirations in spite of the current state of society (f) to value their culture and way of life (g) never be a victim (Will, 2019; Milner, 2006). These lessons paired with the effective pedagogy (Will, 2019) that Black teachers were trained in by HBCUs that were well-versed in how to educate Black children (Franklin, 1980) made the learning, development, and high achievement probable for Black students (Will, 2019).

Milner (2006) claims that Black student achieve more when they have access to teachers who are invested in them and take their success as a personal success. Black teachers offered that for their students, and this has been proven throughout the history of Black education (Milner, 2006). *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education* caused a vast and detrimental decline in in the access of Black students to Black teachers (Milner, 2006). This phenomenon has left Black students to be underserved and unsupported academically and socially (Milner, 2006).

Black students gain tremendously when they have a Black teacher (Milner, 2006; Will, 2019; Du Bois, 1969; Franklin, 1980; Bristol, 2017; Brown & Butty, 1999; Bryan & Milton, 2017). When this is able to occur, Black students are more apt to finish high

school and seek higher education (Brown & Butty, 1999) and Will (2019) even declares that these things are likely to happen even if Black students only have one Black teacher while in elementary school. Will (2019) also claims that giftedness in Black students is more likely to be recognized by Black teachers and that Black teachers tend to have higher expectations for Black students than their White teachers. Research also shows that Black students are less likely to have disciplinary issues when they have had the experience of having Black teachers (Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Will 2019). Because government and film propaganda vilified the Black man since Reconstruction, there was a widespread distrust and fear of Black men raping or marrying White women (Franklin, 1979). This disgraceful and unfounded fear caused Southern Whites to fight against Black men teaching their children (Brown, 2012). They did not want Black women teaching their children either, but more often a Black woman would be the sole Black teacher in the entire school. The end of segregated schools in America pervasively and negatively impacted Black teachers as whole. It even more so affected the representation of Black men educators.

Having teachers of the same race impacts student achievement (Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017). Johns Hopkins University reported research done by the Institute of Labor Economics. The study found that students who have same-race teachers perform better academically and affectively (Rosen, 2017). The study showed that students who have elementary teachers of the same race perform better on standardized tests and it is more probable that those students will graduate from high school (Gershenson et al., 2017; Rosen, 2017). If an economically disadvantaged Black student has at least one Black teacher in grades 3-5, that student's likelihood of dropping

out of school is cut by 29% (Gershenson et al., 2017). If an economically disadvantaged Black boy has at least one Black teacher in elementary school, his likelihood of dropping out of school is cut by 39% (Gershenson et al., 2017). The study also showed that Black students perform better because Black teachers have higher expectations for Black students than White teachers do (Gershenson et al., 2017). When looking at the same Black student that a Black teacher is looking at, a White teacher was 40 percent less likely to predict the student would finish high school (Gershenson et al., 2017).

Experiences of Black Men Educators

The experiences of Black men currently in the public education profession are varied but many have negative connotations (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). There was often no place for the Black man in the public education profession after the 1954 *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education* Supreme Court decision (Milner, 2006). At the time this research was conducted, the researcher could only find two studies (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Bristol, 2017) in the literature research that focus on the Black man's direct influence within the school environment. As a result, the reviewed literature focuses on Black educators as a whole and wherever specific mention of the Black man's contribution was mentioned the researcher offered a review. The decline of Black men in the education profession in many instances led to Black boys experiencing a regression in academic performance, behavior, and interest in education (Brown, 2012). Some Black boys respond with negative behaviors to the challenges of school and the effects of being marginalized in society leading officials to advocate for the recruitment of Black men teachers (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; White, 2017). The idea is that Black boys who have access to Black men as teachers will improve their learning and behavior (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; White, 2017). However, Black men

educators report that their colleagues expect them to be disciplinarians primarily and that educating students should be secondary (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brown & Butty, 1999; Lindsay & Hart, 2017). They claim that their colleagues only reach out to them for help with discipline, and they never seek their assistance for curriculum-related questions (Brown, 2012; Mentor & Bristol, 2018). Black men educators do not agree that they make good disciplinarians for Black boys solely based on their shared race and gender (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Rather, Black men educators believe that they meet the boys' affective needs to help them develop socially and emotionally (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; White, 2017; Brown, 2012). In this way, they can have a lasting impact on the boys academically and behaviorally (Bristol & Mentor, 2018).

According to Casteel (1998) schools typically give Black men teachers discipline duties instead of mentoring duties (Casteel, 1998). Bristol and Mentor (2018) conducted a qualitative research study to explore the experiences of 27 African American men teachers. The participants shared they were often expected to be in charge of disciplining students. The men shared that they did not feel valued as teachers and felt they were expected to be highly effective in crowd control and redirecting behavior (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Most of these African American men reported making themselves mentors to the students instead of disciplinarians (Bristol & Mentor, 2018).

In order to understand the experiences of 86 African American men teachers in an urban school district, Bristol (2017) gave them an environment survey. Bristol (2017) found that the men who had other African American men colleagues in their building had better experiences and senses of belonging than those who had one or no African American men colleagues in their building. Bristol (2017) also found that the African

American men teachers did not feel as if they had a voice in policymaking in contrast to their White colleagues. These men also reported that they believed many of their White colleagues feared them and that their mere presence was a cause of concern for many stakeholders (Bristol, 2017). These findings draw a parallel between the way Black men have been viewed and valued historically in American society and the way they are viewed and valued in the education field.

In order to understand the school experiences of Black men educators, more research is needed. The current school-based studies, focusing solely on the experiences of the Black man educator are few and have small samples. The present proposed study seeks to add more insight into those experiences.

Research Questions

This qualitative research study is about understanding how the lived experiences of African American men affect their representation in the education profession. This study will be conducted with these guiding research questions:

1. What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?

2. What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?

3. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

Theoretical Perspective

Grant and Osanloo (2014) describe the theoretical framework as the plan or outline for "the entire dissertation inquiry" (p.13). The theoretical framework is essential to the foundation of a research study and is closely tied to the personal beliefs and perceptions of the researcher (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). This qualitative research study is guided by theoretical ideas that were originally developed by William E. Cross, Jr. in 1971, when he first introduced what he called nigrescence, or "the process by which a person becomes Black" (Helms, 1990, p.17). Cross, Parham, and Helms (1991) expanded this thinking and the theory of nigrescence, referring to it as the theory of Black Identity Development (BID). More recently, Cross and other theorists in this field of identity development collaborated with Wijeyesinghe & Jackson (2001) to provide new perspectives on the development of racial identity.

When choosing the theoretical framework for this qualitative study, the researcher considered the background and evolution of identity development from the introduction of the nigrescence model of the early 1970s, to its expansion into Black Identity Development (BID), Black Racial Identity Development (BRID; Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991), White Racial Identity Development (Helms, 1993) as well as the more recent introduction of the Racial and Cultural Identity Development (RCID; Sue & Sue, 2013) model that describes the development of various racial and cultural identities. The researcher recognizes the interrelatedness of all these models. The initial work of Cross impacted all subsequent racial and cultural identity theories and conceptualizations (Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005). The researcher ultimately chose the Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) model as the guide for this qualitative research

study due to its focus on how the African in America (or the Negro) transitions to the Black identity politically assigned to him. Cross (1971) calls this the Negro to Black conversion. The researcher chose BRID because it shows the stages of identity development that as Black person enters as a result of his experience with racism in America (Cross, 1991). BRID can be used to understand how the historical and lived experiences African American men have had with marginalization, vilification, and racism may affect their choice to become an educator.

Key concepts of BRID. The theory of Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) is defined as the process through which people who are the descendants of enslaved Africans in America proceed through psychological stages where they begin to develop an acceptance of a Black identity as a result of oppressive societal conditions (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). Like nigrescence and BID, BRID is an idea that gives perspective to the acceptance of a racial identity in a country where race and other identities are generally formed to assign suggestive societal and political value to groups of people (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001).

Cross' (1991) model illustrates how Black individuals progress from a stage of viewing the White racial identity group as being the ideal to a stage where the individual embraces and values the Black identity assigned to him. This understanding led the researcher to choose the Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) model along with the new understandings of the effects of intersectionality, or how race, gender, class, and other individual characteristics intersect with one another (Crenshaw, 1989), to inform this qualitative study. The key concepts of identity development and intersectionality align with the belief that conceptualized models of social identity should take an

integrated approach in describing individuals' lived experiences (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). BRID assumes that (a) society rewards and punishes individuals for being members of certain racial or cultural groups; (b) membership in a racial or cultural group is critical to an individual's psychological and social identity as a result of the way society rewards and punishes his racial or cultural group; and (c) racial and cultural identity development show the maturity process of individuals who ultimately rid themselves of the negative, detrimental depictions of self that are inflicted by society and instead embraces positive, internal ideas of self (Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005).

The basic concepts of BRID are: (1) the development of racial and cultural identity happens through progressing through stages (2) the way an individual feels about himself is tied to his personal identity and the group with which society associates him (Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005). Within the BRID theory, Cross' five stages of Nigrescence have been renamed *statuses of identity change* (Owens, 2010). Those statuses of identity change are as follows: (a) pre-encounter, (b) encounter (c) immersion/emersion, (d) internalization, and (e) internalization-commitment (Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005).

The *pre-encounter* status is characterized by one being unmindful of his race and the effects it has socially (Cross et al.,1991). The *encounter* status begins when the individual has an experience that abruptly causes him to become aware of race and its power to provoke strong vulnerabilities (Cross et al. 1991). The *immersion-emersion* status is marked by one newly discovering, owning, and defending his *Blackness* (Cross et al., 1991). During the *internalization* status, an individual faces society by owning and

defending his Blackness. He participates in society with a strong sense of his racial identity, and he finally feels secure in who he is (Cross et al., 1991). He is also able to have relationships with other racial groups, but he may tend to care more about constantly edifying Blackness than cultivating these other relationships (Cross et al., 1991). During this status, the individual may feel that he does not express or defend his Blackness enough as is necessary. He may also develop anxiety about expressing his Blackness in an acceptable way to his racial group even to the detriment of his relationship with other racial groups (Cross et al., 1991). In the *internalization-commitment* status, there is a great stability that the person feels because he has peace with his Blackness, embracing it completely while valuing other racial groups as well (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). The individual in this stage will also be involved in social change (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). It is important to note that over the course of their lives individuals may reenter the various stages of this identity development process, but they are not regressing; rather they are reassessing and maturing as a result of their lived experiences (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001).

As Cross' (1991) original theory has become increasingly researched, accepted, and modeled after over the years, several interpretations of the model have been developed; however, theorists agree that it is the first two statuses (Pre-Encounter and Encounter) that are critical for a person to accept a racial identity (Cross et al., 1991; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001; Owens, 2010; Vandiver et al., 2001; Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2013). During the pre-encounter and encounter statuses, conformity and dissonance (Sue & Sue, 2013) occur respectively, and a person—excluding those of European descent (Helms, 1993) —begins to feel the burden

of belonging to a group and wanting the question of who they are answered (Sue & Sue, 2013). The Black person as an individual in America comes to develop what Cross calls the Black consciousness (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). The Black individual develops this consciousness while proceeding through the identity statuses explained above (Cross et al., 1991). These statuses provide a framework for how Black people begin to adapt a racial identity as a result of the experiences of being politically labeled as Black in a society that is dominated by European American (White) social norms that embrace oppressive ideals, laws, and institutions (Cross et al., 1991). The BRID theory assumes that *Black* people are deeply interrupted as a result of their life experiences in American society (Owens, 2010). America proffers racism as a strong institutional barrier blocking Black people from full progress and actualization (Cross et al., 1991). As a result, Black people in America have a hindered quality of life.

BRID and connections to this study. BRID informs the extent to which racism affects African American people (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001) and as a result can be applied to the understanding of why Black men do or do not choose the K-12 public education as a profession. When they begin to recognize their *blackness* in a racist society and within themselves, Black men begin to develop various "Black" racial identities or statuses of consciousness (Owens, 2010). BRID is connected to this research study.

During this study, Black men will share their lived experiences and any other desired commentary they wish. Based on that data, the researcher will get an understanding of the BRID statuses that each man has undergone. This insight will help understand their representation in the K-12 public education profession. For example, a

Black man who has never experienced the internalization-commitment (Cross, 1991) status, may not be inclined to feel that he would be accepted or effective in the education profession that serves diverse student populations. Another Black man who has only experienced the pre-encounter and encounter (Cross, 1991) statuses may feel that he is not internally worthy or externally important enough in society to be charged with the responsibility of educating that same society's youth.

The BRID theory suggests that the Black person's consciousness is determined by the degree of influence that racism has had in his or her life (Cross et al., 1991). A Black man who has experienced racism in school may allow that experience to impact his choice to become an educator. Because African Americans as individuals have diverse experiences with racism, they can be affected in different ways (Cross et al., 1991). As a result, one Black man may choose education as a profession and for the same reason, another may not choose it.

The BRID theory suggests that African Americans gain varying degrees of understanding of the effects of racism, and as they acquire an understanding, they also begin to figure out their environment and their *place* within that environment (Owens, 2010). BRID connects to this research study because it is a guide to understanding how a Black man's identity and the racism he encounters have an impact on whether he concludes that the K-12 public education environment is one where he has no place (Owens, 2010).

This study of the representation of Black men in the K-12 public education profession is informed by the Black Racial Identity (BRID) theory. The BRID theory proposes that Black people in America begin to understand their value in society based

on how they are treated and viewed by America's valued institutions (Vandiver et al., 2001); this research can give insight into whether Black men consider that they are valued by the American school institution as potential teachers and instructional leaders and consequently allow that consideration to determine the profession they choose (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010). This research can give insight into the BRID status of Black men that choose to enter and remain in the K-12 education profession. Essentially, BRID informs the ways in which Black men view themselves and their place in society and can be used to aid in understanding why they do or do not choose to become educators within the American K-12 public school system (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2010).

The tenets of the BRID theory can be applied to understand the elements of the research for this study. Because the BRID theory seeks to understand the mindset of African Americans in American society (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, & Cokely, 2001), it can also be used to inform the research for the representation of African American men in the K-12 public education teaching profession. BRID theory focuses on the lived experiences of Black Americans to provide an understanding of how they view themselves, other Black Americans, and other racial groups (Vandiver et al., 2001); the BRID theory will help gain insight into how their lived experiences affect their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession, which predominantly consists of White/European American women (Villegas et al., 2012). As a result, the researcher can find answers to how African American men can be recruited and retained in the K-12 public education teacher profession.

Summary/Conclusion

Understanding how the lived experiences of African American men affects their representation in the K-12 public education profession is a topic that is affected by the education history of African American people as a whole (Brown, 2012; White, 2017). While there is ample research about African (Black) American teachers and students, Teachers and Students of Color, and other diverse populations, there is little specifically about African (Black) American men educators.

Only two studies (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Bristol, 2017) that focus on the Black man's influence in education could be found in the literature search. As a result, the reviewed literature focuses on Black educators as a whole and wherever specific mention of the Black man's contribution was mentioned the researcher offered a review. The literature review for this qualitative study highlights some research involving the history Black education, including the intellectual thought of two notable Black educators: Carter G. Woodson (1919) and W.E.B Du Bois (1969), who have each offered insight to the state of education for Black Americans for specific times in history as well as spans of time in history. The relevant experiences of Black educators are important in understanding the lived experiences of the Black men educators that will take part in this study.

This chapter also presented literature regarding how Black people have viewed education from their African ancestry and colonialism (Mosweunyane, 2013) to Reconstruction/Jim Crow (Gates, 2019; Woodson, 1919; Du Bois, 1969; Franklin, 1980). This literature review further outlined how missionaries who thought the plight of the African in America as the "Negro Problem" and set out to educate them only to make them pliant rather than to edify them. In addition, the question Mill (2019) posed about

the implications of Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education is also important to review. Such stumbling blocks to the representation of Black teachers in education are important to understanding possible reasons leading to the current representation of Black men in education. A review of research regarding Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) was also included, as it is important in understanding how Black teachers receive training. The literature review offered research about the effects that desegregation had on the representation of African American teachers in US public schools as well as the effects this low representation has on African American students. This chapter reviews literature that is also focused specifically on research findings about the low representation of African American teachers in Arkansas and throughout the US. There is also a review of literature regarding the racial disparity among teachers in the profession and the experience of the African American men in education.

The review of literature concluded with a detailed explanation of Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) theory (Cross et al., 1991; Vandiver et al., 2001). As the framework for this qualitative study, BRID informs the research questions for this study. BRID provides guidance into how the experiences in a society that marginalizes Black people can affect them. As a result of such experiences, the Black individual begins to understand where they belong and where they can have a meaningful contribution. This relates to this research study because the Black man chooses whether he belongs in education, directly relating to representation. As a whole, this literature review shows the trials in education that Black men, along with their entire race, have endured in this country. It also points to the systematic exclusion of Black men from the field education as a result of desegregation, and how those who do choose to enter the profession often

are devalued as educators in favor of being valued as disciplinarians. All of this leads

this researcher to conduct research to gain insight into how such lived experiences

can lead educators to seek ways to begin recruiting and retaining more Black men in

education (which will be outlined in Chapter 3).

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods the researcher will use in this study. This qualitative, phenomenological study will provide insight into the lived experiences (Patton, 2015) of African American men that ultimately influenced their decision about entering the K-12 public education profession. The research design, description of participants, data collection process, and data analysis are described in this chapter. This qualitative study will be conducted with these research questions as guides:

1. What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?

2. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?

3. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

Research Design

Using the phenomenological approach, this qualitative study will offer insight into the representation of African American men in the K-12 public education profession. A qualitative research design is effective for this type of inquiry, allowing the researcher to understand the men as individuals who have unique as well as parallel stories to tell about their experiences as African American boys and men in the American South. The qualitative research design allows the researcher to find significant meaning (Patton, 2015) within their stories. Just as is conveyed in Halcolm's *Laws of Inquiry*, if there is no new experience, there can be no new insight (as cited in Patton, 2015). With

qualitative research design, the researcher could ask many questions of the participants to find out more about their full experiences, the old and the new. In this way, the researcher will gain new insight into what their experiences mean in relation to their individual decision to choose education as a profession. Qualitative research allows for interpretation of meaning (Patton, 2015). As is characteristic of qualitative research design, through this study the researcher will be able to get a sensitive and individualized understanding of each participant as they share their experiences (Groenewald, 2004).

Phenomenology is defined as a research approach that describes the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Teherani et al., 2015). The purpose of phenomenology is for individuals to describe their experiences and ultimately to understand the significance they place on those experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological approach is appropriate for this qualitative study because the researcher will be able to describe the lived experiences of African American men participants (Creswell, 2018) that led to their feelings about entering the teaching profession. This study will use interviews, artifacts, focus groups, notes, and journals to aid the researcher in understanding the core of the Black man's life experiences and the participants' perceptions about their representation as K-12 public school educators. The phenomenological approach will also guide the researcher's thinking while analyzing the data.

Participants

This study will explore the lived experiences of a small sample of approximately 8-12 African American men in the state of Arkansas. The study participants include African American men from school districts in Arkansas who chose to become K-12

public school educators. These men are at various stages of their teaching career, various grade categories (elementary, middle, and high school), and various school population classifications (rural, suburban, and rural). Only African American professional men will be surveyed. Teachers and other professionals who are not African American men (such as White men, White women, and Black women) will be excluded from the survey. Further, this study will not include African American men who are teachers at private schools.

Sampling method. This study will utilize convenience and snowball sampling to recruit participants. First, convenience sampling will be used. Convenience sampling is defined as a system of choosing participants because they are accessible and believed to be representative of the target population (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2017). The accessible population that is achieved as a result of convenience sampling is also known as the survey population (Gliner et al., 2017). The researcher will use convenience sampling to select a small group of African American men educators from the larger population of educators in Arkansas (Gliner et al., 2017). Convenience sampling is appropriate for this study because the participants can be solicited from various school districts across the state of Arkansas where the potential participants are accessible to the researcher (Suen, Huang, & Lee, 2014) by virtue of her professional partnerships.

Snowball sampling will also be used in this study. Snowball sampling is a modified version of convenience sampling and is used when soliciting participants from a rare population (Gliner et al., 2017). It is also used when the researcher does not know or have access to all potential participants. Snowball sampling is suitable for this study because the researcher will need to recruit more African American men educators to be

participants. In doing so, the researcher will ask the participants for names of other

African American men educators to participate in the study. When the researcher

contacts the new educators, the researcher will also ask them for names of other

potential participants (Gliner et al., 2017).

To obtain even more potential participants, the researcher will also reach out to

the Arkansas Department of Education's Division of Elementary and Secondary

Education. The researcher will request names and email addresses of all the

Black/African American men who are certified in teaching or administration at school

districts across the state. The researcher will then email all of those educators, letting

them know the relevance and importance of the research study, along with an interest

survey. The survey will be brief and will request the following information:

1. Participant's first and last name

2. Participant's city, school district, and school

3. Whether the participant identifies as Black/African American

4. Whether the participant identifies as male

5. Whether the participant identifies as a K-12 public school educator

6. Areas of certification

7. Number of years as an educator (0-5; 5-10; 10-15; 15 or more)

8. Interest in a follow-up interview

The qualifiers to participate in this study are all of the following (a) to identify as

Black/African American; (b) to identify as male; (c) to identify as a K-12 public school

educator; (d) expressed interest in a follow-up interview. Those men who respond to the

email and complete the survey will be selected by the researcher for interviews based on the aforementioned qualifiers.

Data Collection

For this study, data collection will occur through interviews, artifacts, and focus groups. Through the data collection process, the men will have the opportunity to describe and narrate the lived experiences that led to them choosing education as a profession as well as factors that led to their decision to be retained in the education profession.

Interviews. The interview will be the main source of data collection for this study. Qualitative interviews use open-ended questions to prompt responses from the participants that reveal their beliefs and understandings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interviews will be conducted one-on-one in person or via a Zoom.us, an online video-conferencing application. The interviews will be recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Before beginning the data-collection process, the researcher attained signed informed consent forms from each participant. A copy of the informed consent forms can be found in Appendices A and B. The consent form described in detail the purpose and process of the research study (Patton, 2015). The consent form also guaranteed that each participant's name and specific contribution to the study during the interview process will be kept anonymous (Patton, 2015). The researcher explained to each participant in written and verbal form that the interview would be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for thematic patterns that fit the study's purpose. Interview protocol included open-ended questions, prompts to expound or clarify, and follow-up questions as needed (Patton, 2015). Table 1 shows the interview questions and the corresponding research questions.

The interviews were scheduled via email and took place in person or via Zoom.us, a video conferencing application. Dates and times of each interview were scheduled to happen at the convenience of the participant. Phenomenological interviews by design encapsulate lived experiences in a comfortable, trusting, informal way (Patton, 2015). As a result, the interviews were conducted in a familiar and conversational manner. The researcher was respectful to each participant and conveyed to them her hopes that the interviews would be conversational and relaxed. In an additional effort to ensure a comfortable atmosphere for each participant, the researcher told the participants that they could choose not to answer certain questions.

When the researcher had interviewed all the initial chosen participants and their recommended participants, saturation or redundancy sampling began to occur (Patton, 2015). Saturation 47occurred when the researcher began to get the same types of responses from the participants, prompting the need to end the interview process as a means of gathering data because the common themes were being repeated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Interview questions. The rules of qualitative interviewing will be employed to find out from the African American men what could not be observed and ultimately to find out their individual perspective (Patton, 2015). In order to learn more about their perceptions and experiences, the researcher will use tips from Patton (2015) about the art of asking questions. The interview questions aligned with the corresponding research questions are below.

Table 1

Interview Questions and Corresponding Research Questions

Interview Questions	Corresponding Research Question (RQ)
Where are you currently employed as an educator, and how long you have been in this position?	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?
How has the presence of (or lack of) other African American men students in your teacher preparation program impacted you?	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?
To what extent was your educational preparation effective in preparing you to become a teacher?	**RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?
How has the presence of (or lack of) other African American men educators as colleagues impacted you?	**RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
Think back to your undergraduate education. Discuss any influence or impact a professor may have had on your decision to become an educator.	**RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

What kind of challenges or discouragement have you experienced while pursuing your teaching degree or while being an educator? Discuss them.	**RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?
Do you believe there is a need for African American men teachers in K-12 education? Why or why not?	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
To what extent have you encouraged African American men to enter the field of education?	**RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
How vital is it for African American men teachers to be teaching our youth? Explain.	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
What or who inspired you to become a teacher?	**RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?
What general reasons would you attribute to the current representation of African American men teachers in K-12 public education?	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the

	responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
Describe the impact African American men educators have on their students and the educational environment as a whole.	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

Artifacts. According to Norum (2008), an artifact is defined as anything that can provide physical evidence of historical, demographic, and personal information about a culture, society, or people. In qualitative inquiry, studying artifacts contributes to the researcher achieving a more in depth understanding of the participants' beliefs, decisions, aspirations, and experiences related to the topic of study (Patton, 2015). The introduction of artifacts can further contribute knowledge that the researcher could not have observed (Patton, 2015). During the interview in this study, each participant will be asked to share an artifact (such as objects, notes, evaluations, books, or photos) that he feels helps capture or represent his lived experiences that led to him choosing education as a profession and the factors that led to his decision to be retained in the education profession.

Focus group. Patton (2015) defines a focus group as "an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic" (p. 475). The use of focus groups in qualitative inquiry provides an intimate opportunity for the researcher to get the perspectives of the participants (Morgan, 1996). Focus groups also increase interaction among participants and participants typically enjoy participating (Morgan, 1996). The researcher can

analyze the deeper meaning regarding topics or questions that cause silence and increased discussions (Patton, 2015). Focus groups are important in bringing together people who have similar backgrounds and experiences so they can discuss the commonalities that affect them (Patton, 2015).

The researcher has chosen a focus group format for data collection for this study because focus groups have proven to be effective in highlighting diverse views and giving historically marginalized groups a forum in which to use their voices (Patton, 2015). In this qualitative study, the focus group will serve as a means to learn more about the participants' personal experiences (Patton, 2015) that led them to the education profession. For this study, the researcher anticipates the African American men participants speaking more freely about their feelings and experiences when given the opportunity to share within a group of other African American men who have had similar life experiences (Patton, 2015).

In order to elicit a variety of views and to enhance trust in the patterns that become apparent in the responses from this fraternity (Patton, 2015), at the end of each individual interview, the researcher will 1) ask the African American/Black man educator to participate in the focus groups, 2) ask him to ask to choose the best availability from a list of potential dates and times for the focus group, and 3) ask him to offer names of other African American/Black men who are educators that may be interested in participating in the research study. The researcher will share with the participants a scheduling poll of several potential dates in order to determine the dates with the highest availabilities among the participants.

At the completion of all the individual interviews, the researcher will send an email inviting the participants to participate in a focus group. A follow-up reminder email will also be sent to each participant at least two weeks prior to the chosen focus group interview date. These emails will invite them to participate in a focus group interview, provide them with a brief statement of the purpose of the study, and describe to them the method in which the focus group will be conducted so that the potential participants can be well-informed. The emails will also include the title of the study, the university, program of study, and the name of the researcher's dissertation chair. The men who respond affirmatively to participating in the focus group and those who respond thoughtfully to the individual interview questions will be chosen to participate in the focus group. They will be sent a Zoom.us link to connect to the focus group at the designated time. Zoom.us is an online medium for conducting virtual meetings.

The potential participants will be told that they have been chosen because they are valued African American men educators in the K-12 public school setting. The researcher conveyed to the chosen participants that their identities will be kept anonymous. Participants were given pseudonyms for this study. The focus group was conducted via the Zoom video-conferencing application. The participants were told that the session would be recorded and transcribed. After analyzing and coding the men's responses from the one-on-one interviews, the researcher developed additional questions to ask the participants during the focus group. These focus group questions were based on common themes that were revealed from the men's responses. This questioning technique prompted a vibrant discussion because all the questions asked of the group were based on the lived experiences that many of the men had in common. Keeping in

mind how difficult it is to hear a response to each question from every man in the group, the researcher asked no more than 12 questions during the hour-long focus group (Patton, 2015). A list of questions that the researcher asked during the focus group are catalogued with the corresponding research question in Table 2.

Table 2.

Focus Group Questions and Corresponding Research Questions

Questions	Research Questions (RQ)
1. Where did you grow up? What was it like growing up in that particular area of the United States? How have those early experiences shaped your view of education? How have those early experiences shaped your view of the educational system in the US?	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of representation in the K-12 public education profession? **RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
2. What led you to become an educator? How has your own experience as an African American child and adult affected your decision to become an educator? To what extent do you still draw on those experiences in your current position as an educator?	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession? **RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
3. Describe any meaningful experience from your teacher preparatory program that	**RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding entrance and retention in the K-12 public

| affected your decision to become an educator. | education teaching profession?
RQ3- What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession? |

4. What have you learned about being an African American man in America and to what extent how did it affect your decision to become an educator?

RQ2- What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?
RQ3- What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

5. How important do you believe it is for African American men to become teachers? Why?

RQ2- What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?
RQ3- What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

6. What were the experiences you had with African American men as teachers when you were in school? Describe any memories you may have regarding your own experience with K-12 teachers of European descent.

RQ3- What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

7. What is your perception of how you are viewed by your colleagues? Your administrators? Your students? Your community?

RQ3- What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

8. What factors have led you to remain in the education profession?	**RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
9. Describe one person who is likely the biggest inspiration for you to become an educator.	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession? **RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
10. Describe any experience you may have had of someone trying to encourage you not to become an educator. Why did you continue?	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession? **RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?
11. Do you know of any African American men who abandoned the path to becoming an educator or who resigned from the education profession; if so, what were his reasons and how do you feel about his decision?	**RQ2-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions of entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession? **RQ3-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?
12. In the decades since the implementation of integration, women have predominantly entered and remained in the	**RQ1-** What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding representation in the K-12 public

teaching profession while men (especially Black men) have chosen other majors and professions. How has this rising trend of disparity affected the education of our youth or how our youth respond to and view education?	education profession?

Credibility

Credibility is described as the trust that can be held in the veracity of the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility is important because it verifies whether the research findings show accurate information from participants as well as an accurate interpretation of the views of the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Because qualitative research has been criticized for being inherently biased (Shufutinksy, 2020), it is imperative to establish credibility systematically (Patton, 2015). For this qualitative study, the researcher will establish credibility using triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity.

Triangulation. In order to enhance the credibility of this qualitative study by producing good data, data triangulation will be utilized (Patton, 2015). Data triangulation refers to using multiple data sources (Cassar & Kiger, 2005). Data triangulation is important because it strengthens a study by using a variety of data sources and checks the consistency of those data sources (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For this study, the researcher will collect data from the participants via a variety of sources: interviews, artifacts, and focus groups.

Member checking. Another strategy to ensure credibility is called member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Member checking is the "process of the researcher recounting to research respondents any data, coding classifications, deductions, and conclusions so that there is no misunderstanding about the respondents' intended meanings" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 122). Member checking is important because it reinforces or makes the data stronger (Patton, 2015). Because researchers and participants see the data differently, member checking is especially important in preventing false impressions or misinterpretations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, member checking will be employed by giving the participants the transcripts of the individual interviews as well as transcripts of the focus group they participated in so the participating men can have the opportunity to give constructive feedback (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher will also give the participants an opportunity to meet via video conferencing to address openly anything that they deem to be a false interpretation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This check will be done once the interviews and focus groups have been transcribed.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is a way for qualitative researchers to ensure the transparency and quality of their research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Patton (2015) describes reflexivity as "a way of emphasizing the importance of deep introspection, political consciousness, cultural awareness, and ownership of one's perspective" (p. 70). Shufutinksy (2020) asserts that the researcher is essential to the credibility of qualitative research. Consequently, the researcher must practice introspection and consider how such factors as her own culture, race, gender, political views, and economic status may impact the way she interprets the perspectives (Patton, 2015) of her participants.

Because qualitative inquiry relies on the researcher's interpretation of the data, reflexivity is critical in establishing trustworthiness (Patton, 2015). The construct of self as researcher necessitates the practice of reflexivity to ensure that the researcher is introspective and self-critical (Patton, 2015). Through the reflexive process, the researcher examines her "background, culture, and experiences" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 182) to reveal how her biases and ethics could influence the study's direction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The goal of reflexivity here is to show that I support honest inquiry as I seek to understand and analyze the lived experiences of Black men that cause them to enter or flee the education profession. Accordingly, I have chosen to discuss experiences that affected my thinking (Berger, 2015) about the representation of Black men in the education profession.

To aid in ensuring the credibility of this study, I will practice introspection while serving in the role of qualitative inquirer (Patton, 2015). I have chosen to study the Black men educator's lived experiences that potentially lead to his representation in K-12 public education. In this section, I will disclose personal experiences and biases that have influenced my interest in this study in an effort to show that I am conscious of how the intersectionality of my race, gender, profession, and economic status influence the way I will collect, react to, and reflect upon the data during the research study.

I am African American, a woman, and an educator. I identify as being a member of the Black *race*, specifically of those people who are descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States. Even as I offer Black as an identity here, I feel compelled to state my belief that Black is more of a political identity than a racial, ethnic, or cultural identity. Black does not reflect my heritage, but it does associate me with people who

look like me (e.g., the men participating in this study) and who have had similar lived experiences. I know my Black*ness* is viewed as a channel connecting me to those like me, so I am very aware that my identity is tied to my research participants. I anticipate feeling a connection to my participants based on our shared Black*ness*, and as the qualitative inquirer, I also cannot dissociate my identity from the research because I am the instrument of qualitative inquiry and analysis (Patton, 2015), but I can acknowledge my identity so that I can conscientiously conduct good research.

I grew up poor in a small town in the Arkansas Delta. As an economically disadvantaged Black girl, I often felt insignificant because I was so underprivileged. However, the training, encouragement, and validation that I received from my family and other valued members of the Black community led me to understand at an early age that I would not allow current circumstances to dictate what I could achieve in spite of being a Black woman in an America that historically devalues *Black* and *woman.* I grew to understand that even if society regards me negatively, I would not allow that oppressive view to become my reality. As a result of my own lived experiences, I have long been interested in recognizing others who are underprivileged and marginalized and are, as a result, underserved in beneficial programs and underrepresented in influential positions. As indicated by my efforts in mentoring teenage girls and serving on boards of nonprofit organizations that benefit girl and woman empowerment, I value the strength and capabilities of women, and I advocate for the fair and equal treatment of the female gender in every aspect of society. In turn, I will make sure the Black men participating in this study feel empowered to tell their stories and trust that what they contribute will not be sullied.

I have also been an educator for over two decades, spending my career as a public school teacher, a school leader, and a university clinical instructor. I have developed relationships professionally and personally with many people throughout my career and have made advocacy for underserved and underrepresented populations my priority. The familiarity I have with the school system and its stakeholders make this research study very important to me. Consequently, I understand that I have an ethical responsibility to the Black Hebraic-decent community, the diverse stakeholders I have served for my entire education career, and to the education profession; I will not spoil that by misrepresenting or misinterpreting the sentiments or perceptions of the Black men who will participate in this study. As a Black woman educator, I feel a deep ethical responsibility to make sure the data gives these Black men a voice and to make sure they feel comfortable knowing that I will not be yet another entity that censors, marginalizes, or otherwise makes them feel invalidated. As a Black woman educator, I understand the power of what they have to say about their experiences. Accordingly, I will safeguard the integrity of their experiences, ensuring that they will not be modified to align with my position as a Black woman educator. I am fully aware of the oppression that comes with the intersectionality of being Black and a woman, and I will not, in turn, be the perpetrator of inflicting those disparaging attitudes upon the Black men who participate in this study. I will approach this research conscientiously while protecting the integrity of the data-collection process.

Over the more than two decades that I have been an educator, I have witnessed several examples of underrepresentation in the schools such as the underrepresentation of Black students in Advanced Placement programs, the underrepresentation of economically disadvantaged students in gifted programs, the underrepresentation of girls

in the chess club, and the underrepresentation of Black men as classroom teachers. All of these examples made me passionate about exploring how representation matters in teaching, learning, and development. I have spent my career advocating for those who are underrepresented, so when given the opportunity to conduct a research study, I was intuitively drawn to a topic about representation. Because I am from a strong Black community in the impoverished Arkansas Delta and because I know the history of the Black man before, during, and after enslavement in this country, I believe that Black men can contribute greatly to the affective and intellectual needs of students. I will keep reflexive notes during each data collection process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Patton, 2015) as a method to keep bias out of my interactions with the participants.

Because qualitative research gives me the opportunity to describe intersecting relationships (Dodgson, 2019) between the Black men educators participating in the study and myself as the researcher, my research findings will be more credible and understandable to readers (Dodgson, 2019). The issues surrounding my reflexivity give me an opportunity to ruminate over how they will affect the way I conduct my research, conclude recurring themes in my data, and analyze that data responsibly (Berger, 2015). To control the quality of qualitative research, I must consider my personal experiences and personal beliefs (Berger, 2015), and as the researcher, I must understand how these may have an impact.

Data Analysis

The researcher will analyze the data gathered in this study closely and conscientiously in order to avoid issues of misinterpreting the Black men participant's intended meanings (Patton, 2015). For this qualitative phenomenological study, the

researcher will use the constant comparative technique to analyze the data collected from the men. The constant comparative method is defined as a technique for analyzing the collected data to find the emergent themes that lie within (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). Hewitt-Taylor (2001) further explains that after the researcher codes the data the first time, she should repeatedly reevaluate the data until it is clearly evident that no new themes have become apparent. This process of constantly revisiting and associating the collected data can be done with one data collection method or in studies that utilize various means of collecting data (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001).

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), this comparative analysis approach is effective when using either a small or a large social group of research participants. With data from the small group of 12 Black men that will be involved in this research study, I will conduct an analysis to identify and code the thematic phenomena of men who share the experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) of being Black in the United States of America and of being a represented population of K-12 public school educators. During this study, I will collect data from the men via interviews, artifacts, and focus groups. I will then perform several steps of content analysis. The data from the individual interviews and focus groups will be transcribed verbatim and will be analyzed using the coding guidelines from Saldana (2016). First, I will code very small pieces of the data from each of the data collection methods (Saldana, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1984) advise that the meaning of these small chosen pieces of data (phrases, sentences, or paragraphs) must be understandable without needing to add more information. Creswell and Creswell (2018) define coding as the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text and assigning a word or phrase to the segment in order to develop a general sense of it. I

will conduct the coding process in this study by identifying common phrases used by the participants in order to identify common themes that those phrases elicit (Saldana, 2016).

Summary

This chapter describes the methodology of this qualitative study that will be used to answer the research questions for understanding the lived experiences and perceptions of Black men educators regarding their representation in K-12 public education. In this chapter the interview questions and corresponding research questions are illustrated.

The chapter explains the data-collection tools that will be used and how the data will be analyzed using the constant comparative approach. Also covered in this chapter are sections on the credibility of study including triangulation, member checking, reflexivity, and researcher positionality.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative research study was to understand the experiences and perceptions that African American men have regarding their current representation in the K-12 public education profession. The research purpose was also to reveal how the lived experiences of African American men affect this demographic's entrance, retention, and responsibilities in the education profession. Data-collection for this research study was done in intentional ways with the intent to hear the lived experiences of the men through their own voices. The researcher collected data from open-ended interview questions, artifacts chosen by the men that represent their individual education journey, and a focus group with the men. The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method to code and identify patterns and themes (Patton, 2015). The Black Racial Identity Development Theory (Cross et al.,1991) informed the research questions and provided a means to understand the reasons the men may choose the education profession, remain in the profession, and feel responsibilities to the profession. The following are the research questions that guided this study:

1. What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?

2. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?

3. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

Participants

Ten African American men participated in this study. The men's years of teaching experience ranged from 3-41 years. They were recruited and selected for this study using convenience and snowball sampling (Patton, 2015), as discussed in Chapter III. All of the men were either accessible to the researcher through school districts in Arkansas by virtue of the researcher's professional partnerships or they were recommended by other participants during the interview phase of the data-collection process. All of the participants are representative of the target population (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2017) and make up a small group of African American men educators in the state of Arkansas.

Table 3 summarizes the demographic information of each participant. The participants are all men who identify as African American or Black. All of the participants identify with being members of the male gender. The participants are all educators in the state of Arkansas who have varying years of experience. As outlined in Table 3, one participant had 41 years of experience as an educator; half of the participants (5/10) were within the range of 20-30 years of experience; a fifth of the participants (2/10) were within the range of 10-19 years of experience; and a fifth of the participants (2/10) were within the range of 3-9 years of experience.

Half of the participants (5/10) predominantly received their education experience in an urban school district. Almost half of the participants (4/10) garnered most of their education experience in a suburban school district and one of them (1/10) from a rural school district. Almost all of the participants (8/10) earned their undergraduate degree from a predominantly White institution (PWI) while the others (2/10) attended a

historically Black college or university (HBCU). Almost half of the participants (4/10) majored in Mathematics Education while the other majors included Elementary Education (2/10); Middle Level Education (1/10); Social Studies Education (1/10); Finance (1/10); Urban Planning (1/10); and English Education (1/10). Half of the participants (5/10) reported earning a Master's degree. Some of the participants (3/10) earned an Education Specialist degree. One of the participants was currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program.

Almost half of the participants (4/10) were currently employed as classroom teachers in a secondary school. Some of the participants (3/10) were employed as secondary school principals while the other participants were employed as elementary principal (1/10); school counselor (1/10); and district level administrator (1/10). Almost all of the participants (8/10) garnered most of their education experience at a secondary school while the others (2/10) received most of their experience at an elementary school.

Table 3
Participant Information

	Title	Major	Institution	Service	Degree	District	Level
1	District Admin.	Elementary	PWI	23	M.S.E.	Suburban	Elementary
2	Principal, retired	Mathematics	HBCU	41	Ed.S.	Rural	Secondary
3	Assistant Principal	Social Studies	PWI	21	Ed.S.	Urban	Secondary
4	Teacher	English	PWI	24	Ph.D.	Suburban	Secondary
5	Teacher	Mathematics	PWI	27	M.S.E.	Suburban	Secondary
6	Teacher	Middle Level	PWI	3	M.A.T.	Suburban	Secondary
7	Principal	Mathematics	HBCU	15	Ed.S.	Urban	Secondary

8	Principal	Elementary	HBCU	23	Ed.S.	Urban	Elementary
9	Teacher	Urban Planning	HBCU	3	B.S.	Urban	Secondary
10	Teacher	Finance	PWI	5	B.S.	Urban	Secondary

Analysis

The recordings from interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim using an online transcription service. Participants were assigned pseudonyms (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) in the transcription process. This assured each participant's anonymity, which was communicated to them verbally and through the informed consent documents (Appendices A & B).

Coding the men's expressive responses to all of the aforementioned prompts was done using the constant comparative method. This method is an effective means of allowing the researcher to find the patterns within the men's words without diminishing their intended meaning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is important to note that the researcher began this process with an inquiry focus and not with a hypothesis, in line with the questions that were asked during the data-collection process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To start off the data analysis process, the researcher read through each interview individually. Then, the researcher summarized each interview by creating a set of codes (Boeije, 2002). These sets of codes were the beginning of the researcher's process of conceptualizing the data (Boeije, 2002). This process also involved note-taking to describe what the researcher was thinking as the data was being analyzed (Boeije, 2002). One purpose for the researcher studying the individual interviews first was to examine

the consistency of what each participant said throughout his interview (Boeije, 2002).

After this close examination, the researcher was then able to label passages the

participants shared with an appropriate code (Boeije, 2002). This process was repeated

with focus group transcripts and artifact descriptions.

During the next phase of the constant comparative analysis process, the

researcher compared codes from the interviews and focus group discussions to each other

(Boeije, 2002; Glaser, 2008; Kolb, 2012). The researcher read, compared, and

categorized each code until all the data was assigned a thematic category (Glaser, 1965;

Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach allowed the various types of data collected from

the participants to be constantly compared and categorized (Glaser, 1965; Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). The researcher used the research questions along with the way the

participants responded to the corresponding data-collection methods as guides by which

to assign codes and to create the initial category labels (Boeije, 2002; Glaser, 2008; Kolb,

2012; Glaser, 1965; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

While employing the constant comparative method, the researcher followed strategic

steps in order to code the participants' responses and descriptions into several thematic

categories (Glaser, 1965; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal of the constant comparisons was

to group the specific descriptions and responses into thematic categories so that one or more

principal themes could be revealed (Glaser, 1965; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through this

analytic process, the researcher sought to convey the men's human experiences and the context

of their words (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher categorized the men's feelings in order

to explain their phenomenological position (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thinking about the

categories led the researcher to make connections

about the relationships the men's perceptions and descriptions have in common so the researcher can discuss the transferability of the research results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher used the findings from the constant comparative method to identify the perceptions the men hold about the representation, retention, recruitment, and responsibilities African American men have in the education profession. The final themes for each research question are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Research Questions, Overarching Themes, and Corresponding Subthemes

	Theme #1: Feelings about Representation
RQ1- What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?	Reasons for underrepresentation
	Disservice of underrepresentation and the value of representation
	Theme #2: Choosing Education as a Lasting Profession
RQ2- What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education profession?	Altruism and intangible benefits
	Identity, influences, affecting change, changing perceptions
	Theme # 3: Responsibilities to Education Advocacy and education reform
RQ3- What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education profession?	Proving himself, making others feel comfortable
	Being a coach, a mentor, or an exemplar
	Being perceived as a disciplinarian or "the muscle"
	"Playing the game" of race and social relations with colleagues/feeling included

Findings

Findings for this study were organized by themes relating to each of the study's three research questions. The principal themes are illustrated through the perspectives of the African American men educators who participated in this phenomenological study.

RQ1: Feelings About Representation

The first research question in this study involved how African American men who are educators feel about the current representation of African American men in the education profession: "What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?" The interview and focus group discussion questions that garnered responses about the participants' feelings about representation of African American/Black men in the education profession were: "Do you believe there is a need for African American men teachers in K-12 education. Why or Why not?" and "What reasons would you attribute to the current representation of African American men in K-12 public education?" Two common themes regarding the current representation of African American men in the education profession were: (a) reasons for underrepresentation and (b) the disservice of underrepresentation and the value of representation.

Reasons for underrepresentation. Underrepresentation means that teachers, administrators, and other licensed educators in the schools disparately reflect the student populations they serve. One hundred percent (10/10) of the participants in this research study indicated there is an underrepresentation of Black men in the education profession. When asked what they think contributes to this underrepresentation, almost all of the participants (8/10) gave similar responses revealing their belief that low representation in schools perpetuates a cycle of low representation. For example, during the focus group, Participant 3, a middle school assistant principal, commented that when "Black boys don't ever have Black men when they are in school," they grow up "never considering education" as an option. Participant 8 agreed with this sentiment, succinctly stating, "…there has to be a model." However, in response to this exchange, Participant 6,

thoughtfully suggested that there was more to this issue. He shared with the group, expressing his belief that Black men are underrepresented because the matter is not taken seriously by those in power who can affect immediate and pervasive change. He used the following illustration to support his thoughts,

> They can get more of us in [education] if they want to. [Districts] know that the need is there. There was a statement one time, made in one of our faculty meetings. One of the administrators threw it out there, said, "Hey, the superintendent talked about getting more minority teachers, specifically Black males." That was all that was said. We went on to another item on the agenda.

Saying he wanted " to piggyback off what [Participant 6] said about recruitment," Participant 8 ardently added,

> "…All other companies recruit and tell what they can offer a potential employer, like a signing bonuses, but in education, they really only focus on…want you to sell yourself and tell them what you have to offer. [They] always ask what I can offer the school instead of what the school can offer me. If schools really wanted more Black men as teachers, they would recruit them.

Participant 3, a middle school assistant principal, immediately agreed with this statement, and added,

> That's a big part of it, yes. Yes, recruitment is not happening. Well, *Black* men are not being recruited. This should be happening at teacher fairs and on college campuses, too. And there needs to be representation at these recruitment events. Black administrators and teachers like us should be invited to these kinds of

events so that the presence is there. There are things that could be done if they really want to have more of us in the schools.

Participant 2 lived the experience of integration as a high schooler in the 1970s; he offered this memory in agreement with the previous point about school districts failing to hire a representative number of Black educators,

> That's part of the issue. It's been happening from the beginning. I don't think they really want as many Black teachers as it takes to represent all the Black students they have in those buildings. That hasn't changed since …my Black school had to start going to the White school when I was in the eleventh grade. …I think I remember Mr. [name redacted], my math teacher and his wife Mrs. [name redacted] English teacher were the only two teachers that came to the White school with us. It seems like I remember my old principal Mr.…., trying to get the position as principal, but…everybody was saying he should have been the one who got it. He didn't get it…

Some of the participants (4/10) discussed the idea that the school system is fundamentally racist and African American men are underrepresented in that institution for systemic and deep-seated reasons. During his interview, Participant 10 consciously offered the following illustration to support this idea,

> My school district is one of the largest districts in the state. To this date, it is one of the largest high schools in the state that has never had an African American head principal, and it is located in a city that is predominantly Black. In our district since 1999, with the exception of two, every African American main principal in secondary—

with the exception of the high school 'cause there's never been an African

American head principal at the high school—in this district every last one of those

African American principals has been demoted. When they were demoted, they

kept them with their salary, but they stripped their title as compensation or "OK

I'm doing you wrong there; don't sue me." So, in 2016, when [the city] came out

of [desegregation]. Deseg lasted in [this city] for 60 years, 60 years before that

funding finally dried up. At that point, then they wanted to go back and

renegotiate with those African American principals that they've demoted over the

years… well, those that were still with the district.

Other participants (3/10) shared Black men are underrepresented in education because

they are discouraged to do so. To illustrate this discouragement occurs, especially at the

elementary level, Participant 6 interjected the following lived experience during the

focus group,

Case in point right quick, I had an administrator tell me, when I first started trying to

reach out and teach. I was going to teach elementary. She told me, she said, "No, I

advise you not to." I said, "Why?" She said, "Well, you're a Black male. The younger

a child is, the more influence you're going to have over… kids and the more parents I

will have contacting me. That's why I teach middle school."

Participant 6 and Participant 2 were children when their schools integrated in the 1970s

at a later phase of the 1954 *Brown v. Topeka* decision. Participant 2's previous response

prompted Participant 6 to share,

I graduated in '83. So, you're only about 10 or so years ahead of me. My small

town was mostly Black back then. Integration happened, but I still had a lot of

Black teachers because most of people in my town were Black. I remember that it wasn't until I left a little small town called [name redacted] that I realized the effect. Then, I said, "Wow! So, this… is different." My Black teachers, especially the Black men had always been so good to me.

Participant 9 had a different opinion about the reason for underrepresentation that no one had previously mentioned. He gave his point of view with conviction, stating,

I wanted to tap in and address the elephant in the room when it comes to Black males in education. That elephant is income. Tell me one career that starts pay under $40K that anyone is eager about going into... when you do find Black males in education, the majority of them do additional things related to the field to boost their income. I know we all love education and children but the need for income is a real burden for most educators. Being a male in education makes that burden that much more difficult as we are supposed to be the provider and protectors of the home.

Participant 3 respectfully said, "I agree and disagree…we're not going to be millionaires. If you want to be rich, education is not the way to do it. You're not going to be rich, but you can impact lives and brothers who don't want to be teachers may just want to choose something else that they have a passion for."

Some of the participants (3/10) mentioned other thoughtful perspectives as to what contributes to underrepresentation. For example, during his interview, Participant 5, a veteran junior high math teacher said, "many African American males deal with identity issues because of the way society views us," conveying that self-identity must be intact to choose education as a career. During his interview, Participant 5 cited Black

men do not choose the teaching profession because it "…doesn't fit the masculine Black man image if you're not a coach…." Participant 10, an advanced manufacturing instructor at a large urban high school, frankly offered during his interview that some Black men do not feel comfortable with having the responsibility for children because "he fears what he could be accused of."

A few of the participants (3/10) noted that some Black men just are not interested in education as a profession and that there is nothing wrong with that. Participant 1, a district level administrator who began his career as an elementary school teacher, said of these men who choose a different profession, "I don't think their heart was in teaching, and they don't want to work with kids. If you're going to be a teacher, you have to like kids." Participant 1 went on to say, "All representation is not good representation."

Disservice of underrepresentation and the value of representation. The majority (7/10) of the participants in this study indicated that the underrepresentation of African American men in the education profession does a disservice to all students. During his personal interview, Participant 10, shared his feeling that the underrepresentation of African American men educators in a school district that is predominantly filled with African Americans is concerning. Participant 10 passionately went on to say that this image does a disservice to the community and all the students it serves. He pointed out that the large urban school district where he teaches is 65% Black, yet the high school has "never had a Black man as the head administrator." Participant 10 professed, "Just the image of that. Just that image of knowing, 'This is as far as you're going to get…" Several participants (6/10) pointed out, that the lack of appropriate representation hinders Black boys from imagining themselves as educators.

During his interview, Participant 6 gave the following illustration to support his thoughts about how the lack of African American men in the classroom affects students:

I hope I don't offend you with this. You take a Black male…raised by a single mother. He's taught by females all day. He really doesn't see a male. He gets frustrated and doesn't know why. It's not that he's mad at the females. It's just, he has no male. There's not a male there. There's nobody that looks like him…so to speak. That can be frustrating. That's very frustrating.

Participant 6 continued to point out the disservice that inadequate representation also causes to Black girls specifically when they have been reprimanded because they were misunderstood by their teachers. He believes that having the representation of a Black man or a Black woman as a teacher would impact Black girls in a positive way since Black people have a shared cultural experience. In the passage below from his individual interview, Participant 6 expresses the following with deep concern,

A lot of time, I don't think they understand. You know how I'm saying Black females at this point, but you know you roll your eyes at somebody, or like this right here? You say something to them, and they do this right here, or something like that? That's not disrespect to me. It's not to me….Sometimes it's a defense mechanism for them. Sometimes it's a defense mechanism for them. They'll do that, and they don't even realize they're doing it. The next thing they know they're in trouble for it. They're in trouble for it. I'm like, "No." I'm saying to myself, "No, they're not being disrespectful. They're not being disrespectful." So, you see that quite often.

During an individual interview with Participant 4, he spoke about the disservice that underrepresentation causes. He imparted a thought-provoking idea that students of diverse backgrounds who have only had teachers of European descent sometimes are subjected to what he called "a lot of tone deafness." To explain his point of view further, he continued by stating, "I'll put it that way….Many of these teachers, my colleagues are tone deaf. They don't hear or see the things that representation affects or [they don't see] that representation matters. As a result, [students] suffer."

During the focus group discussion, Participant 1, a former high school principal who is currently a district level administrator, offered a similar viewpoint when he discussed the harm that underrepresentation causes to African American boys when they have teachers who don't understand them. Participant 1 spoke purposely about his experience as a school administrator who handled discipline referrals. He suggested that not having teachers from the various and diverse backgrounds leads to a compounded discipline issue. He told the focus group that he often saw two ways in which overrepresented teachers approached interacting with Black boys: "overcompensation or intolerance." He described what he meant in the following passage,

> …for the most part, when you're in administration, you see the troubled kids…you're seeing the kids that are in trouble, and a lot of times, it's our African American boys. I don't know if that's part of the societal whatever, but I know a lot of teachers sometimes, they don't know. It's one or two things that our counterparts [do]. Either [they] overcompensate by treating them so nice and so this and that and then the kids…start to take advantage of them and start running over them. And then, when that happens, they don't know what to do and then

they send them on, or they don't even give them a chance when they walk in the room….So, neither one of them is good.

Participant 1 went on to explain that the disservice of the underrepresentation of "Black men and Black teachers in general" leads to the need for overrepresented teachers "to have a little background, little training to kind of understand and know where all of their students are coming from and how they're living…." His comment indicated that teachers don't always know or value the backgrounds of the students they teach; rather they tend to hold students to mainstream, middle class social norms. However, Participant 7 also made sure to point out that when he was in college, one of his favorite teachers was a White woman because she "believed in me and wanted me to be successful." Participant 3, expressed a different idea, stating, "White teachers are also very inspiring and caring teachers. As long as they care about all of their students and have high expectations for them and understand who they are as people." Participant 5 shared that not all Black teachers have students' best interest in mind either,

> "It's one thing to get more African Americans in the school system, but it goes beyond just that simple because we have African Americans here that are, for lack of a better word, *Tobies*. They are the ones who always want to be in the picture. Every time there's a picture, they're there, but when it comes to actually working with the kids-

Participant 3, a middle school assistant principal with 21 years of experience in education, agreed with Participant 1's last statement, then added his belief that *all* students of all backgrounds fail to benefit when there is an underrepresentation of Black

men in education. He shared with the group his hope for students regarding diverse representation by stating,

> I would love to see from preschool all the way through 12th grade that students have an African-American male teacher…. We have a way of reaching and connecting, not only with those who look like us, but because we're so loving and caring, we can connect with anyone. I think that if you talk to any students who had me as a building principal, whether they're Latino, White, Black, doesn't matter, one thing that they will say about Mr. A. is that he cares about me. That's something that African American men that are in the profession, they always want to let the students know that they care about them.

Participant 1's statement, "All representation is not good representation" echoes a recurring theme that almost half of the participants (4/10) indicated during the data-collection process. The participants believed that the quality of the educator is far more beneficial than it is simply to have a larger number of African American men in education. Participant 5 stated, "Numbers do not equate to quality. You have to have people that are dedicated." Participant 6 stated that he works hard to be a great teacher and a positive presence in the classroom. He wants his students to see his example as someone from a similar or different background, and believe that they, too, can be a teacher, "so, when they look at me, they see a Black male in here, both males and females; they say, "Okay, we can be in authority. We can do this." Participant 6 also believes that he influences his Black students because they have the shared experience of being Black in America; he stated,

…you have to have somebody that looks like you, that went through some of the

similar experiences. Even if you were raised rich, and the other person was raised

poor, just by y'all skin tone, you know that you've share some experiences

together. No matter what. So, you have to have somebody that looks like you in

order to be motivated.

During his interview, Participant 6 expressed that he also believes he is a

positive influence on his White students as well, and he maintained,

Then…for my White students, you think about this right here. Most of the time, we

have a lifelong effect on their minds. I can go back to teachers right now and think

about it. You think about those same students. They're going to be CEOs.

They're going to be supervisors. They can be all this right here. They're going to

think back and say, "Oh, I had Mr…. He was alright." … Black folks aren't the

way society paints. Even though they may be around some racist people, they can

speak their mind and say, "Black folks ain't like that. I know they're not like that,

because I had Mr…. and he had influence over me."

Participant 6 goes on to say that because he works to be the best at his craft and to value

all of his students, "my students are going to give you a chance because their belief

system is not the same as their mom and dad's." Showing his agreement and adding that

quality representation matters in the lives of the students, Participant 3 offered,

When they see someone, who looks like them say, "Hey, there's a different path

that you can go on or different things that you can do, and I'm proof of that," that

gives them that example that they only hear about. That's the reason we need

African-American males to give them someone who looks like them, who's

successful, who cares about them and instills something on the inside of them that says, "Hey, I can be the next Mr….., or I can be greater than Mr….." That starts with quality representation.

Participant 5 explained his feelings about how significant it is for teachers to engage with and embrace diverse cultures. The lack of adequate and quality representation of teachers affects students:

…when you don't live or engage with a culture outside of the job that you teach, you have no clue. You have no point of reference in dealing with him, except what you see on the news, or what you hear on the TV, or what your friends post or the way you hear them walking and talking up and down the hallway. It is easy to see African American kids being late to class. It's easy to see African American kids being loud up and down the hallway. Whereas, if what the white kids are doing is something that's a custom in your culture, they don't see it as an issue.

During his interview Participant 7, an educator with 15 years of experience, had a lot to say about having only two Black teachers in his own K-12 schooling; his transition to an HBCU for college; and the impact his leadership has had on the school where he is the principal. He also declared that the school he leads is working at "beating the trend" of underrepresentation and that representation matters in schools no matter what the position is. He said,

I only had two black teachers in my time in [name redacted] …my first one wasn't until eighth grade and then I had another one for ninth grade. They both were history teachers. But then there's another gap there, you know what I'm saying?

...my time in high school… And then I kind of just flipped and I went to [name redacted] which is an HBCU. So that means that there's nothing but Black, you know what I'm saying? So, you see a whole different perspective…. Then I transitioned to [name redacted] …I'll say probably if I look at my school right now, we're probably the exception, because when I think about it; I have an all-male administrative staff… two of those males …they're African American males. If I'm looking at my teachers right now…off the top of my head I have about nine African-American staff, and they range…in courses, and pretty much I have in core courses of social studies, computer science, math…and also Science as well, so we're kind of beating those trends there, but I'll just be honest with you there can always be more, and I think in any kind of school setting the more diverse you are, the better you're going to actually be because that's what's happening to our schools. Our schools are becoming more diverse, so we have to really embrace that. And I just think when it comes to a child, a Black child, African American child, that the more they see of us and the more they see of us in those kinds of positions as a teacher, as a mentor, as an administrator. I mean, even as a custodian, in all of those different facets of the school, they get a better sense of the identity of themselves or what they could possibly be compared to seeing—just being honest with you, others that don't look like them--on a regular basis, constant basis…So, I'm going to double down, triple down on that. There can never be enough.

During his interview, Participant 4, a 24-year veteran teacher, had this to say about the value of representation:

…when we don't have representation that matters…when we don't have a multiplicity of skin tones, a multiplicity of background experiences, and we don't have a multiplicity of languages of different things, our world suffers I think our communities suffer ... I think we have to as African Americans, Black people, as college professors, as whoever will listen and whoever will do the good work, we have to take measures to get our people back into the profession, know that there are those intangible rewards that are profuse in the profession. So, I really think that that's where we've suffered, not having the representation. Representation matters. It just matters. I know voice matters, but if we don't have a seat at the table, you're not going to have a voice…Oh, this is so good. Not because I made it up; I can't take credit for it. "Diversity is being asked to the party, to be invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance." You got to include me.

RQ2: Choosing Education as a Lasting Profession

The second research question was: "What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?" The following interview and focus group questions elicited ideas the participants gave about entering and remaining in the education profession: (a) What led you to become an educator? (b) What factors led you to remain in the education profession? and (c) What is your perception of how you are viewed by your colleagues your administrators, your students, or your community? Four themes that indicate why Black men choose to enter and remain in the K-12 education profession are: (a) positive influences and support of Black colleagues/educators, (b) altruism and a background of service, and (c) artifacts symbolizing the impact on students.

Positive influences and support of educators and Black colleagues. Almost all of the participants (7/10) indicated one reason for choosing education was the result of someone or some experience that was a positive influence in their lives. During his personal interview, Participant 4 conveyed that he was weighing the idea of several different career paths until he was positively affected by one of his professors,

> I always knew from my days coaching soccer at the Boys' club, that I enjoyed working with young people. So, I toyed with the idea of being a pediatrician. And I liked the idea maybe of coaching. I ran track as a young person, so I thought maybe I'd be a coach, or I even toyed with being a flight attendant…But it wasn't until my third or fourth year…that I decided upon the suggestion of a favorite professor to look at the education department… She just lit me on fire with her enthusiasm. And I believe that has kind of bled over into my own teaching style. So, on the literal level, I think it was that professor who extended an olive branch so to speak or encouraged me to enter [the teaching profession].

Participant 4 reminisced about his days coaching and tutoring at the Boys' Club. He believed that in retrospect becoming a teacher "was a seed, always germinating, and it was being produced when I didn't even know I was a teacher in the making."

During their interview or focus group almost half of the men (4/10) spoke proudly of their various historically Black college or university (HBCU) alma maters and how they were positively influenced there. During his interview, Participant 7, a principal, excitedly shared the following about his HBCU made a positive impact on his education journey,

Well, first of all, I'd tell everybody my education was second to none at [name redacted]. Part of it was the faculty that I had there and the mix of backgrounds. Black faculty was probably the majority, but it was still diverse, so I'll just give you this example, and... I think this is what sums it all up. My advisor was a White lady, [name redacted]. She was the head of the math department at Tennessee. I don't know how I lucked out to get the head of the department as my advisor, but I loved it because she taught me so much. She was a Freedom Rider. And so, when we have class and we get points and we would get to talking math and everything else, she would tell us stories about times that she took journeys and the life, the dangers that were back then, but she truly believed that everybody should be able to read. Everybody. I don't care who you are. You know what I'm saying? And she was like, "It was worth me giving my life to doing that. And that's why I'm here." For me, I just feel like any other school-- that experience there and dealing with instructors that really pushed you… because they know that because of the color of your skin, you've got to be that much better. You know what I'm saying? That I can't say that I've met any other, now that motivation has stuck in me, so as I go anywhere else, I continue to push myself like that in my mind, but they helped cultivate that during that experience. And then of course, it's just the love and the support shown. In fact, my first orientation teacher was from [name redacted], Arkansas. So, like, as soon as she found out I was from Arkansas, it was like, "Hey, you got to make sure you know, this, this, this."…I'll say this: so, pride, if you almost ask any person who has been to an HBCU, you ask them what their Alma Mater is they should be able to tell

you because there's "Orientation Class 101." And now when I just think about it now, and I think about my time [there]- I'll tell it to you, because this is going to just describe my time [there] to this day. All right, "I had the land of golden sunshine on the calmness, fertile shores and stands a school of greatest service, one that we adore. Alma Mater, how we love thee! How we love that white and blue! As we strive to meet our mandate, which patent true, go [name redacted]!" I'm just saying that experience right there is just- you can't beat it … That's what always resonates in my mind. As I even talked to kids in [name redacted], I had one of my students actually from the COE that actually got into the engineering program at [name redacted]. And I just told him, I said, "Man, you're going to love the experience. You're going to love the environment. You are going to love the people, and they're going to teach you something that you are going to never forget."

Participant 7 also shared that it was a Black educator, an assistant principal, who was also a parent of a student he tutored at their church who "kind of really took me under his wing. He actually helped me get my first teaching position."

During his interview, Participant 6, also mentioned that he was inspired to become a teacher because of the "influences from those actual Black male teachers. I say Black male teachers because that's what we're talking about, but there were Black females, also…They weren't perfect, but what they had to offer I guess, not only the teacher, but also the social advice they'd give you."

Participant 7 added that he has also been influenced by other educators who have become

very dear to him,

> I also got a couple of other male influential friends. I have another one…we taught together at the high school that I started at and then he went into administration. And right now, he currently is a director and principal of a private charter school…that deals with poverty level children, African American and also Hispanic. He's actually my son's godfather, so me and him we talk on a regular basis as well. He actually he knows I'm pretty much following in his path, meaning that he was an assistant principal at a high school, assistant principal at middle school, became a principal of a middle school, and now he is a director/principal of a private charter school. So, I really do talk to him a lot about ins and outs, things that he came across, pitfalls, how to deal with certain parents, how to deal with certain perceptions, and things of that nature. …, I still talk to him to this day. Definitely influenced me and continues to influence me in what I do…

Some of the participants (4/10) cited having fellow Black colleagues in the building helped encourage them to stay in the profession. Participant 8 said that it is good to have someone he can go to for support that he "doesn't have to code-switch with." Participant 6 said there was a Black man who was long-term substitute in the building, and he said, "I was happy to have him to talk to. He is a smart man. Very smart man. I hope he gets that job permanently. He is earning it." Participant 5 said,

> What helped me, I had two African Americans in the school where I first started teaching. They had been there before me. We were able to sit down at lunch and talk about stuff. They taught me how to survive in that system. Who would have

your back, who wouldn't have your back. What's tolerable. What's not tolerable,

and just recounting your day. It wasn't so much teaching me how to be good. They

were teaching me how to survive and get my feet wet in the education system, and

then I was able to hone my teaching craft and move forward. **Altruism and a**

background of service. The majority of the participants (7/10)

gave altruistic, or selfless reasons for becoming a teacher and for staying in the

profession. The participants mentioned phrases such as "the love of kids," "giving

back," "wanting to help," and "making an impact." For example, during his interview,

Participant 5, a junior high math teacher, shared, "Just helping someone…just seeing

someone's light turned on has always been a joy. Even right now, 27 years later, when a

kid gets it, it makes it all worth it."

Over half of the participants (6/10) stated that they did acts of service before they

became teachers and continued such contributions. For example, Participant 2, was a

math tutor in college. He was a public school educator for 41, who recently retired and

began teaching in a GED program at a men's prison in the state. Participant 3, a principal,

coached a youth football team. Participant 5, a math teacher, was a math tutor in college.

Participant 4, a middle school English teacher, volunteered at a boy's club, coaching

soccer and tutoring the kids. Participant 6, a middle school math teacher, spent 20 years

in the military before going to college to become a teacher. During his personal

interview, Participant 1, a district level administrator, shared,

I just loved math. I was a math major. I didn't know what I was going to do with it.

While I was at [name redacted], a church that I went to, I used to tutor all the kids. I

was their youth teacher for Sunday School, but then I also tutored them.

Come to find out all of their parents were educators: either principals, teachers, whatever. They were like, "Hey, we know our kids can be a handful, but you do a great job. You should look into teaching." So, that's what initially go me in the field.

During his interview, Participant 7, conveyed that he wants to give the best to his students,

I really honestly feel that this is where you make the difference. Kids in general, I just think about this between all the social media that's out here, all the other influential factors that they deal with on a regular basis, we hold so much influence to really help determine how their desired outcome comes out. I really think that we hold that and to have the ability to do that, to have the ability to help, assist, that continues to keep me doing this on a regular basis. Because if not, and if we didn't have anybody or anyone that's dedicated to this, then I'll just be honest with you. Our children, our generations behind us are lost. We have to be willing to lead them.

Artifacts symbolizing impact on students. The participants were asked to provide artifacts from their education journey that are meaningful to them. The artifacts were listed in their own section because the artifacts shared seemed to relate to the research question regarding choosing education as a lasting profession. The majority of the participants (7/10) described an artifact that represented his education journey. Most of the men (4/7) who shared an artifact described something that was given to them by a student. The rest of the men (3/7) shared an artifact that was symbolic of what they hope to contribute to education. Essentially, all of the artifacts represent the participants'

calling to impact the lives of children, just as Participant 5 stated during his interview. For example, Participant 4's artifact was a picture of Nelson Mandela. He described the artifact and how it reminds him that he has more work to do to impact his students and the education profession. This is how he described it:

> Nelson Mandela… has a quote in my favorite book by him which is *A Long Walk to* Freedom. My favorite book of all time. My favorite nonfiction book, I'd say. And in that book toward the end of the book he talks about, and I'll try not to tear up because I will cry. He talks about how, "Now that I have walked so many miles, and I have had so many journeys, and I've gotten to the top of this peak and look back at the vista of how far I've come, if I've looked the other way, I see that there are still"- I'm getting chills. He said, "I see that there are so still so many more mountains to climb." And the way that that quote reads exactly is after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. And at the end of that, six to seven or 800 page book he has, he just paints that scene so well. And I think it's applicable not only sometimes to our personal lives, but to our occupations. And I brought that as an object that sort of represents me because I feel that even though I've contemplated leaving, not necessarily the profession, but this exact segment of the profession that I'm in. As I look back and I see how far I've come, I look forward, and I see so many or so much room for potential impacts and so much work yet still to be done.

Participant 6, a middle school math teacher, also described a picture that was taken him and published in the newspaper when he was in high school. He discussed how the

picture reminds him how impactful educators can be in the lives of students. This is
how he described it:

> When I was in high school, someone came there and presented a flag to the
> school, and they present [the flag] to me…They took a picture of me in the paper.
> I had my head down, like this right here. I was shaking a hand and getting a flag,
> so the next day, my coach, also he was my health teacher. He came back and was
> like, "Come here." This is something he said, "Listen, whenever you're getting
> presented by someone, look I their eyes, shake their hand. Even when you're
> talking to somebody--you've got your head down now." He said, "Hold your
> head up and look me in the eyes." Now, that sounds like something I should have
> known… I didn't know that.

Participant 1, now a district level administrator, began his career as an elementary school
teacher. He later became a coach. The artifact he shared is his coaching whistle. He said,

> It's hanging on my wall, and it's my coaching whistle. And I'm currently
> working on a book. I don't know if I'll ever finish it, but it's *Teach Like a Coach*.
> And so, everything a coach does and a lot of people want to kind of down-talk
> coaches…they're lazy, stuff like that…Of course, you got that, just like in every
> person. But for the most part, coaches get kids to do what they don't want to do
> half the time. A kid really [doesn't] want to run, but somehow, these coaches get
> them to run farther and run harder. And just like how to teach with examples and
> repetition and allowing them to do it before like the games on the test. Practice is
> homework. And so, they're doing the homework during practice and so while

they're doing their homework; they're getting that feedback. I mean, just all

the aspects of coaching are how a teacher should teach in the classroom.

Participant 5, a junior high math teacher with 27 years in education, described his artifact which was a rubber mallet decorated in flower stickers and affirmations. It was left on his desk by his students after they had gotten to know him. At first, they seemed timid around him because he was a tall Black man who always twirled and pointed a yard stick while he was teaching. When the students got to know him and realized he was good teacher and that he was funny, they felt comfortable making jokes with him. They gave him the rubber mallet because they knew he would never harm them as they had previously thought. Participant 5 keeps it as a symbol that as a tall Black man teaching children who are predominantly White, he can still be seen as a valuable asset in their lives.

Participant 10, an advanced manufacturing teacher, shared a picture of wooden domino pieces and a wooden bench. These images symbolize the impact he has had on his students. He said,

> I have several pictures to choose from but I'll start with this one. For 3 years, I taught a shop class at an alternative school and my daily warm up became a game of homemade dominoes from pallet wood. The dominoes were made by the students and it helped with their math skills. The second picture is a bench made from 2 x 4's that the students sold as a fundraiser to buy more materials. Students completed all measurements, cutting, and assembly."

Participant 10 said the artifacts show how impactful and empowering it can be when young men are taught to use their hands and their minds.

Participant 2, a middle school principal who was an educator for 41 years, shared a scar on

his arm and described it as his artifact. The scar is "the bite marks from [a student]. Her bite marks that I will carry for life and her letter apologizing is my artifact. It just reminds me of all the…who sought refuge in my office and the…that were seemingly uncontrollable until I was able to be a mentor to them.

RQ3: Responsibilities to Education

The third research question in this study involved what African American men educators believe their responsibilities are to the education profession: "What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teaching profession?" Five themes were derived from the participants' responses during the interviews and focus group: (a) advocacy and affecting change, (b) proving himself and having self-worth; (c) being a coach, a mentor, or an exemplar, (d) being perceived as a disciplinarian or the "muscle," and (e) "playing the game" of race, identity, and feeling included.

Advocacy and affecting change. The majority of the participants (6/10) stated they have a responsibility to advocate for their students and to affect change in education where change needs to occur. During his interview Participant 4, a middle school English teacher who is also seeking a Ph.D. in leadership, conveyed that he has a responsibility to be an advocate. He said… "not just an advocate, but I'm learning that we have to be 'agitant' sometimes we have to agitate situations to get change to occur." Participant 4, with introspection shared how he responds to injustices,

...When I see injustice, it pricked something in my being. And not that I'm that flag-

burning or that person who goes out and breaks windows, but I have my voice, I

have to speak up…and I don't really have a what-do-I-have-to-lose kind of

mentality. It's not that kind of bravado. But it's that I've got to be the voice for the

voiceless. When I see a kid, well my area that I'm researching is discipline

practices. And so, when I see a kid who was being disciplined unjustly, or to a

degree not experienced by their white counterparts, then I have to be that person,

not just to do the research, but do the work that follows the research that

will help make things better.

Participant 7, a middle school principal, shared his feelings about affecting change in

the education system to be more impactful and inclusive. He said the school systems are

becoming more diverse and he is working to make sure that his school reflects that

change. He continued to speak about the societal issues and the overall political climate

of today that affect our students, teachers, and education. His words show how he

advocates for change by affecting the teachers and students in his building. He

rationalized,

I'll say it like this, and … just being candid. It's kind of turned some real eyesores

and has really made us kind of realize: "Are we equal or we're not equal?" Or, even

in the terms of not necessarily equal, "What's equitable and what's not equitable?

You know what I'm saying? The Capitol building … like a great example: I had a lot

of teacher friends reach out to me when this happened. I know my students paid

attention to it. I chose not to focus on this because as my students come into the

building, and I try to preach to my staff as well that a lot of

things that happen on the outside of the four walls, we really don't have control

over, so we have to maximize the control that we have inside and the influence

you have inside the building. But, I mean, I'll be honest with you, I mean, our

whole school almost went on pause when they stormed the Capitol. I'll just be

honest with you. Literally I'm sitting there, I'm meeting with a teacher, and I was

just dismissing it, and my media [specialist] comes in and says, "…[name

redacted] I know you're not really about all… I think you really probably need to

turn on Channel 11 and take a look at it more." And as I'm just looking there,

there's nothing I can say. My mouth is just wide open. And to hear them say that

it's just wrong and that if it was African Americans there that would have been a

blood bath beyond and everything would have been justified... So, I would be

naive to say that things like that do not affect my kids, do not affect my staff, do

not affect anybody because I would be totally been ignorant to that fact. It does.

The goal in mind is that we have to maximize our influence… *Every* kid is

important. *Every* child. All right. I even told them this, and I said, I'll be honest

with you. And I said, even our students struggle with it as well because they

interact well with each other… once they notice there's a difference, then that's

when they start acting a little bit … different. And I tell the staff, I said, "Y'all

have to realize that, that innate thought to start seeing people different. That's a

trained reaction." All right. Because naturally, I mean, if you see two little kids

together, Black, White, whatever, they'll interact and play with each other like

there's nothing wrong. And it [doesn't] matter if it's one got a runny nose. The

other one... That's just innate in them to do. But when we start looking at the

differences, that's trained; that's taught, so we got to make sure in the building we're not teaching that. ... That teacher is giving the best to *every* student in that building. For education, that has to be the case. That just has to be. … I tell my Black teachers, too because they want to give special emphasis to it, and I say, "Hey, that's great." I said, "But where we really make the difference and the change is when we are giving our *all* to *everybody*."

Participant 10, who teaches in the career/technical education area, discussed how he advocates for students "who don't know what they don't know." He advocates for schools to become more skills focused as they were before

…the focus was taken out of the schools during the crack era of the '80s. Back then and before, our kids knew how to use their hands to work and make a living. Now, with the increased emphasis on testing skills, the skills that students need for survival without a college education have been lost. We need that back. We need that career technical focus back. One thing about me is that if they decide to get rid of me today, I can be on somebody's job tomorrow because I know how to do more. I have skills and that's what our students need in order to feel motivated. They need to know that they will be able to earn money and they can actually do that by learning to use their hands creatively and to work.

Proving himself and having self-worth. Most of the participants (6/10) disclosed that as educators, they have to prove themselves. Participant 5, a junior high school math teacher with 27 years of experience, shared an experience where he had to speak up for himself about his qualifications for a new position. He recalled telling his

principal how he has always made sure that his students have the highest scores

on standardized exams; Participant 5 asserted,

> When the kids are successful. The one time I did speak on my behalf, I told
>
> admin, I said, "Go back and pull my test scores for the last 20 years. Find
>
> someone that's outscored me in the last 20 years. Go pull my test scores in math,
>
> on the ACT, whatever you want to go, go pull it. I can tell you right here, look at
>
> me. I have never had a class that scored below the 60th percentile as a whole. I've
>
> never had that."

After remarking that in his suburban school district that is about 30 percent

Black, he is often the first Black teacher his students have ever had, Participant 5 shared

that he has to prove himself to his students:

> I'm African American. I'm larger than most in the classroom. When
>
> people look at [me], kids look at [me] the first few weeks of school,
>
> they're afraid. You have to prove yourself to them within the first two
>
> weeks of school…They're like "Do you actually know what you're
>
> doing? Can you actually teach…? Can they actually learn something?"

He had a great deal to say about being an African American man and the importance and

burden of always being beyond reproach. During the focus group, Participant 8 shared a

lived experience about when he got his first position teaching 1st and 2nd grades at a

predominantly White suburban elementary school. In this story, he shares how he had to

prove himself:

> When my first grade students saw me and realized I was their teacher, they cried.
>
> I think they had seen a Black man before, but for some reason, they were scared

to have me as their teacher. And these were first graders, man. I couldn't believe it, but those little kids just cried and cried. Parents were called and started requesting for their children to be moved to another teacher. I had to convince all of them to let their kids stay in my class. I begged them to give me four weeks, and I promised that they would all feel more comfortable if they just got to know me. We are tender. We care. We love kids…I ended moving to 5th grade, and all the parents of the kids I had in that first grade class requested me for 5th grade.

The little girl who cried the most and whose parents were the hardest to convince sent me an email apology and a graduation invitation. This was back in 1998-99.

In his interview, Participant 4, a middle school English teacher, expressed his self-worth and that he does not want to be a victim of tokenism. He said, "Don't just invite me to be a quota filler. I want to matter in the lives of those kids. Include me. Don't just say I'm there on your staff or in that department, and I'm your— I hate to say it, but I'm going to be real—I'm your token.

During his interview, Participant 6 shared an experience when he had gotten his first teaching position. He was the only Black man teacher in the building, and there was only one Black woman teacher. Participant 6 said when he was introduced at a meeting a colleague, he felt that she was trying to justify his presence. He said,

What's going on is that we always have to be justified. We have to be justified. Even now, I have to be justified. I was in a meeting one time. Somebody introduced me, and they know a little bit about my background. They introduced me, and they start telling them about my military experience and different things to build me up. It was my first year teaching. I wasn't mad at them, but they were

justifying me to the group of why I'm the only Black male in there, of why I'm in here.

Being a coach, a mentor, or an exemplar. Almost half of the participants (4/10) mentioned that they need to be a coach, a mentor, or exemplar for their students. For example, during his interview, Participant 4, a middle school English teacher, gave an example of times when he has to coach his students into putting forth more effort. He said,

> So, I feel like in some sense with my African American males in particular, I'm able to grab them, in a sense, in a way and speak to them and make an impression on them that not only they need, but that they secretly appreciate. Sometimes when we do a poem in the classroom like "Don't Quit" or something that really catches with the students. I'm like, "Oh guys, I think you all just kind of secretly like poetry, don't you?" And so, I think what African Americans… like just two hours ago in my fourth period class, there was a kid who didn't give… he didn't give his all, and I talked to him in a way that he was like, "OK, Mr. [name redacted] I'm going to do a second attempt on that and I'm going to do better." I just was able to speak to him in a way, not saying that I'm all that and a bag of chips and dips on the side, but it's just a way that I can make a connection with him that I know exceeds what comes out of the textbook.

Participant 6, a middle school math teacher, said this during his interview that he feels he has the responsibility as a teacher to be a mentor and that sometimes this mentorship especially benefits his Black students because they have similar cultural experiences,

…I do talk to them about social issues and things of that nature right there. The conversation [doesn't] stop at, "Where is your work?" It doesn't stop there. I'm trying to find out why you're not doing your work. When I start talking to them, I'd say I do get more of them…because they relate to me because they see somebody that looks like them. They can't really discuss an issue that I haven't experienced.

Participant 5 said sometimes he only had that sometimes "African American students are a little guarded when they are in a class with only one other African American, but when there are more, they want to clown around for their friends. It's a mask they used because "I don't understand what's going on in this class, so I'm going to act this way" so they don't get called upon. What I do in that situation is I get real. I take them outside and say,

"You know what color I am. Do not come in my classroom embarrassing me." I tell them about all the obstacles they have in front of them, but also all the opportunities that they have. You have an opportunity to do something, but it's up to you to make that decision. You don't have to act this way. Even if you got plenty of examples of bad things in your life and you see things. Try to look ahead and decide, what will I apply? What do I want? And then how can I get to that point without having to look over my shoulder all the time or without having to worry about someone questioning me about a, b, and c. If you are doing something that's moving you forward, you don't have to look behind.

During his interview, Participant 6, a middle school principal, said he's always thinking about his students' futures,

It's kind of weird. I look at them 5-10 years ahead of time. I'll start looking at them even middle school students. I still walk down the hallway. I start looking at what they're going to be looking like in five years when they graduate…and I tell them, and this is just me doing future talk. One of my biggest fears, I tell them, my middle school kids, high school kids, "When I was your age, I could do some things. I did some dumb stuff. I really did. I made some bad decisions…That's why even as first nature, I'm not even yelling because I've done it. But y'all live in a different day and time where one 'nonsmart' decision can ultimately cost you your life…." It's about changing the way a student think. It's about equipping them with the knowledge they need to be successful."

Being perceived a disciplinarian or "the muscle." Almost half of the participants (4/10) expressed that they are often given the responsibility to discipline students or be "the muscle" during physical altercations between students even if it takes him away from his instructional duties. The phrase, "the muscle" was used a few times by the men to describe how they believe their colleagues, administrators, and even students tend to consider them the ones to call to handle physical altercations between students. During his interview, Participant 3, a middle school assistant principal, said even when he was a history teacher, he was expected to be "the muscle." Participant 5, a math teacher, said,

Every day when something goes wrong, I'm the first one they call. [Administrators] call out even if I'm teaching, "We got …down the hallway, Mr. [name redacted]. Then, they'll come and find me. Even the kids will come, "Mr. [name redacted]," I have kids that have come and found me in the men's room.

I'm like, "What?" The female teachers, too; they expect it of me, "Can you

go talk to him?" Especially the African American kids.

During his interview, Participant 4 gave a similar account, saying,

We as African American teachers are sometimes relegated to the position of

disciplinarian. That's… another little caveat because it's like, "Yes, I'm passionate

about what I do, but I don't need you to pull me out of my class three times to

come and help you with 'Raequan.' Yes, I'm 'Raequan's' advocate, but don't

relegate me to just that."

During his interview, Participant 6, a middle school math teacher, explained how

he is expected to help with discipline, "in a round-about way." He shared a story that

happened during his first year of teaching. He was the only Black man teacher in the

building so they relied on him to talk to Black students from time to time. However, this

time, was a different approach. A young Black girl was having some discipline issues in

her classes,

She was a behavior issue, a bad, bad issue, bad, real bad. I'm serious. She was out

there, but she was in my class. We connected and we had a great rapport…But

one day, she came in the classroom and she wouldn't stop…She went at me in

front of everybody. She just went at it. What I hated at this point was that they

moved her to my class, by the way, for that reason, for me to try to help her…she

made a scene, and I had to write her up. That caused her to get kicked off the

basketball team. It caused her to go to ATL. The problem with that is that, I felt

like I was being used as the last stop… "I feel like y'all used me as the last stop

like if she can't make it with Mr. …, she can't make it with anybody. I felt bad.
They were like if Mr… can't get through to her, no one can. But, they made me
the last stop, but to me I was the first stop. That was the first stop.

"Playing the game" of race, identity, and feeling included. Half of the
participants (5/10) shared that they have worked in schools or currently work in a school
where the faculty is predominantly made up of White women. Almost half of the
participants (4/10) shared that during his career he has often been the sole Black man or
one of two among his licensed colleagues. Almost all of the participants (7/10) shared
similar sentiments that at some point in their careers, they have felt awkward, a sense of
heaviness, or that they felt like an outsider among their colleagues. As a result,
Participant 6 said, "I just kind of play the game and try to fit where I'm supposed to fit
so to speak." Participant 5 said that most of his students are White; he averages about
two Black students out of 28 each class period. He shared that sometimes even feels that
as a Black teacher, he feels a responsibility "to dance back and forth between races." He
described what he meant by saying,

I want to connect with and kids and not just being cool with Black kids, but all
[kids]. Now, this is just how I feel, but, if a Black kid sees that you are in
connection with everybody, they always try to figure you out, "Okay, he's Black,
but he ain't all the way Black, but he's not all the way White either. What is it? I
even have had this conversation with my White friends. I tell them, "The position
I'm in is one you will never understand." I have to dance between the races.
That's it. When I'm around African Americans, their attitudes and mindsets are
different. When I'm around White people, their attitudes and mindsets are

different, so me having to dance back and forth between those two different

races, it has shaped how I deal with people.

He goes on to talk about the advice his dad gave him,

Don't know everything about one thing. Know a little bit about everything, so

that you're never lost in any type of conversation. You can relate to anybody on

their level. What they see is not always what it is. Once they get to know you,

what they see is a whole different dynamic.

In regards to feeling included among his colleagues, Participant 5 shared,

Your value is not respected in the meeting. When you speak, and you try to tell

them something different, it's not respected. It's not received. It's frustrating. I

can sit in a meeting. It's very frustrating when you know that you know

material and you throw something out there, and it gets glossed over. But the

one thing I can say is when you do your job, you don't worry about that.

During the focus group Participant 3 had a different experience, saying he felt he was

regularly relied on for his expertise and that he was always chosen "to help problem-

solve," but as the conversation progressed, he added, "Now, that was not the case early

in my career, but I've been doing this for over 20 years now."

A few of the participants (3/10) indicated that at some point in their career, they

were employed as an athletic coach. On the other hand, the majority of the participants

(7/10) have never been employed as an athletic coach. During his interview, Participant

2, a retired principal with 41 years of experience in education, shared an interesting

story about how he came to be a coach right after being hired for his first math teaching

position. He recalled,

My first job, when I first came out of the military, I started teaching at [name redacted]. My first job was teaching 7th grade algebra and advanced algebra. … and I was also the soccer coach, assistant coach in all the other sports, basketball, football, although I knew nothing about them.

The researcher then followed-up, "So, you were not endorsed in those sports, but you ended up being the coach of all of them?" Participant 2 continued, telling how because he looked athletic, he was given coaching assignments in addition to his duties as a math teacher,

Yes, I guess I have an athletic look. The man who hired me was an assertive man, just had that air about him…He called me, and he told me that they were starting soccer. He said he needed a coach. I tell him I don't know anything about soccer. He said, "Well, I'll get back with you." And so, I go about my business. Next time I saw him, he told me, "You're the soccer coach." And so, I had to learn soccer, learn to play soccer, learn the rules, and that's how I got into soccer. Soccer had just been instituted in the [name redacted] school system. In fact, our game started before any other game, so I actually coached the first soccer game ever played in the [name redacted] school district.

Participant 5, a junior high math teacher, recalls times that people have assumed he was a coach and never would have guessed that he is actually an algebra and geometry teacher. He shared what those frustrating encounters are like,

When you are in the classroom, and you're a teacher, you're teaching kids. When you go hang out with your boys, "Yeah, I teach kids." "Oh, you're a teacher? You deal with other people's kids?"…when you're in education, I can't tell you the

number of times when people find out I'm a teacher, white people find out you're a teacher, "What do you teach?" I teach math." "You teach math? Wow." It's a shock. "What math do you teach? "Algebra, geometry." "You teach that?" "Oh, I didn't do good in that." "You teach that?" It's a shock. Or they'll say, "Do you coach?" No, no I don't coach. I teach. I teach." It's not expected. I'll never forget one of my White kid's dad show up, and he said, "Where's Mr. [name redacted]?" "I'm like, "That's me." He said, "I just want to me the man my son said was cool." He was like, "all I hear about is you." He was like, "I just want to shake your hand. It takes a lot to be cool with me."

During his interview Participant 7, a middle school principal, was asked a follow-up question, "So, how has societal views of African American men affected your identity? His response illustrates his feelings about awareness of his identity and how he owns his identity and society cannot affect him in that way,

> For me personally, I would say I'm aware of it, but it doesn't affect me. And part of it goes to what has influenced me and the people that influenced me. I'll speak it. I said it before. I have two educational mentors that are strong, … I'll also say this, too. My father was in my life. You know what I'm saying? So that means, being in my life every turn, every... He was there, you know what I'm saying? … So, that is really what I draw my influence from … that's who I really look at to influence me or my feelings on certain things ... But, everybody doesn't have that. …that I believe can really hinder Black males. It can. But then also comes where I come into play, where others come into play as well in providing a support system that really needs to happen…And that's the network side of it. We can't let society

tell us how to feel. We want to pay attention to what they do…and not how to cultivate how we should look at things. I hate to say this; we can't end this conversation…right now. I want to say- Our 45th president of the United States, okay, is bad. As he may have been and all the things that he did. Think about all the support he had. Now as misleading, as is bad as it may be, but it was support. Unbelievable! But check this out, but then we go and I'm going to shed light on us, and I will speak the whole truth. I go back to President Obama, and I could talk to Black folks to this day right now that can't stand his guts. And I'm like oh. Now don't get me wrong. I can point fault in almost every President, every man; you're not going to be able to please everybody. But again, the support for our own, we struggle with that, and I call that mental slavery that we have not been able to as a people figure a way out of it. You know what I'm saying? We got out of the physical bonds of slavery, even though it kind of brings the head back every once in a while, of the mental aspect of what it did and how it divided us…We got to make sure we know it's a problem, and then start taking intentional steps to fixing that problem.

Summary

Chapter 4 outlined the findings resulting from the analysis of data gathered from interviews, a focus group, and artifact descriptions. Findings were organized by each of the following research questions:

1. What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?

2. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?

3. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

Key findings related to the research questions are: (a) The underrepresentation of African American men in K-12 public education is an issue. (b) Underrepresentation does a disservice to all students. (c) Students who have adequate representation within their educators perform better and can imagine themselves as educators. (d) School districts and the state can put forth more effort to recruit African American educators. (e) African American men tend to become teachers because they were positively influenced by an educator. (f) African American men tend to remain in the education professor for altruistic, unselfish reasons. (g) African American men educators feel compelled to advocate for their students and their education. (h) African American men feel the responsibility to prove themselves and show their worth as an educator. (i) African American men are often considered responsible for discipline even if their primary position is teaching. (j) African American men feel that they positively impact the lives of their students. (k) Large urban districts in Arkansas are still guided by systemic racist ideology in its hiring practices. (l) African American men who teach with predominantly White faculty feel isolated from their colleagues. (m) Self-identity is important to be a good educator. (n) African American men who teach in the building with other African American educators are more likely to say in the profession. (o) African American

colleagues provide meaningful advice to novice African American men. (p) African American men have to prove themselves to students, colleagues, and parents. (q) African American men educators struggle with feelings of isolation related to their race and gender. (r) African American men educators are often assumed to be athletic coaches instead of content area teachers. (s) African American men have varying ideas about how their racial identity is tied to the way society treats and values them. (t) Schools still face the effects of losing Black educators being demoted or relieved of their positions due to systemic desegregation practices. (u) Africa American men are sometimes discouraged from being elementary school teachers.

Chapter V: Conclusions

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study was to understand the perceptions and experiences of African American/Black men educators concerning their representation in the K-12 public education profession. The researcher wanted to understand the phenomenon surrounding why they choose to enter and remain in the public education profession while also gaining insight into what these African American/Black men educators perceive are their responsibilities to education. The researcher sought inspiration from the educators regarding ways to recruit and retain African American/Black men in the education profession. This study was used as a way to hear the men tell their own stories about their lives before and during their tenure as educators. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?

2. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?

3. What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?

Data informing the research findings in this study were attained from nine individual interviews, a focus group of eight participants, and seven artifact descriptions. Topics discussed and explored through the interviews, focus group, and artifact descriptions included (a) opinions about representation; (b) perceived reasons for underrepresentation; (c) perceived responsibilities of Black men educators; (d) perceived

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reasons for entering and remaining in education; (e) influential educators (f) perceptions about the Black man educator (g) the disservice of underrepresentation. (h) race, identity, and societal impact (i) effects of desegregation (j) assumptions regarding Black men as athletic coaches and disciplinarians (k) feelings of isolation in schools with no other Black men (l) feelings of inclusion in schools with a group of Black educators. Key findings are summarized below for each of the three research questions.

Data informing the first research question, "What are African American/Black men's perceptions of their representation in the K-12 public education profession?" indicated (a) perceived reasons for underrepresentation and (b) the disservice of underrepresentation and the value of representation. The findings from the second research question, "What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding their entrance and retention in the K-12 public education teaching profession?" indicated (a) positive influences and support of Black colleagues/educators, (b) altruism and a background of service, and (c) artifacts symbolizing the impact on students. Findings from the third research question, "What are African American/Black men's perceptions regarding the responsibilities African American men have to and within the K-12 public education teacher profession?" garnered the participant's perceptions (a) advocacy and affecting change, (b) proving himself and having self-worth; (c) being a coach, a mentor, or an exemplar, (d) being perceived as a disciplinarian or the "muscle," and (e) "playing the game" of race, identity, and feeling included.

Discussion

This phenomenological research study took a glimpse into the lived experiences of a small group of Black men who are educators in the state of Arkansas. The study offers conclusions that can give insight into this particular demographic who share identities and similar experiences within the education profession. As evidenced by the perspectives and the lived experiences of the men in this study, this phenomenon has affected educators and *all* students in many ways. This section highlights the three key findings of this study: (a) discouragement of Black men from entering the elementary education; (b) effects of desegregation efforts on Black educators and students; (c) the Black man educator: disciplinarian or sentimentalist.

Discouragement of Black Men from Entering Elementary Education

As the findings from this study indicated, Black men are discouraged from becoming elementary school teachers. Yet, as noted in the literature review, students who have elementary teachers of the same race perform better on standardized tests and it is more probable that those students will graduate from high school (Gershenson et al., 2017; Rosen, 2017). Three of the men in this study shared similar experiences about school administrators, students, and parents who did not immediately trust the men to educate or be responsible for the development of younger children, especially White children. This likely stems from the propaganda about Black men being rapists and criminals (Franklin, 1979). These ill-conceived ideas have pervaded society (Franklin, 1979). The Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) theory offers insight into the way Black men develop a psychological identity as a result of societal views (Cross, et al., 1991). BRID theory suggests that Black people progress through a series of psychological Black racial

identity stages or statuses as a result of the way they are rewarded and punished in society based on their membership in racial and cultural group (Cross, et al., 1991; Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005). BRID can offer insight into the way Black men respond to being discouraged from becoming elementary school teachers (Millner, 2006).

Men who make the decision to be influenced by the discouragement and choose a career at a different education level or who choose a different profession show signs of what BRID theory calls the *encounter* status (Cross et al., 1991). At the *encounter* status one experiences a racially motivated event that suddenly causes him to become aware of his assigned race in a new way, which causes him to be vulnerable (Cross et al., 1991). Participant 6 is an of one who was likely in the *encounter* status. This participant took an administrator's advice not to seek an elementary school teaching position. The administrator advised that parents would always request to have their child removed from his class; be concerned about and questioning of his intentions as a teacher; and question every decision he made as a teacher. Participant 6 took the administrator's advice and was eventually hired to teach middle school students instead of his first choice to teach elementary school students. His decision supports the Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) theory in that he is likely in the *encounter* status. As a Black man, he was vulnerable and made the choice he thought was best for him at the time (Cross et al., 1991). He chose to defer his plans to become an elementary school teacher. This choice may have made him feel safer in a society that views him unfavorably (Millner, 2006). Elementary students who could have had the representation of a Black man educator were denied that access (Lutz, 2017; Millner, 2006; Will, 2019). The participant was eventually hired at the middle school level where he was able to make a difference. He

was still impacted by racial biases, but not the fallout that is unique to the elementary level. His decision supports the Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) theory in that he was likely in the *encounter* status. The *encounter* status is marked by the participant having an experience that abruptly caused him to become aware of race and its power to provoke strong vulnerabilities (Cross et al. 1991).

Black men who make the decision to go against any discouragement and continue on their selected path to elementary education are likely showing characteristics of the *internalization-commitment* status (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). In the *internalization-commitment* status, men who are comfortable and at peace with their *Blackness* will embrace the races of people who are displaying biases toward him and try to see his worth for the good of society (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). Participant 8 is one such example of a Black man who was likely in the *internalization-commitment* status. He began his career as a first grade teacher in a suburban elementary school that was predominantly White. Facing the fear and biases of the parents and students, this participant pleaded with them to give him time to show his worth. He ultimately did prove that he was a good, caring teacher for elementary students. As is characteristic of BRID's *internalization-commitment* status, this Black man educator involved himself in seeking change where change was necessary in society (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001). He met many obstacles that could have discouraged him from continuing such as students crying because they were afraid of him and parents requesting for their students to be put in another teacher's class. This participant was able to be resilient and persistent by doing all he could to earn the trust of the parents and the respect and admiration of his students. This participant showed that he was secure in his identity and was not too intimidated to

prove his talents in the classroom and his love for his students. His actions indicate that he is likely at the *internalization* status of BRID, which marks a point when an individual faces society by owning and defending his *Blackness.* He participates in society with a strong sense of his racial identity, and he feels secure in what he can contribute to *all* students (Cross et al., 1991).

Effects of Desegregation Methods on Black Educators

Still today the effects of the ideals surrounding segregation and the impact of desegregation are present. As indicated in the literature review, thousands of Black teachers and administrators were ousted from their education careers or the were demoted (Will, 2019). The Black men educators reveal the way desegregation was implemented throughout the past 67 years continues to impact the underrepresentation and disparities among teachers. The men's perspectives of this study, one can make the conclusion that there are three major effects of segregation and desegregation (a) Black educators are still vastly underrepresented, (b) tokenism occurs and (c) Black teachers suffer isolation.

Black educators are still vastly underrepresented. According to the Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) theory, Black people may prefer situations including professions where they are associating with other predominantly Black people (Cross et al., 1991). The biased and racist way that desegregation was implemented in this country does not help Black men move away from this BRID theory characteristic to being comfortable in professional settings no matter the race of their colleagues. School districts' failure to provide adequate representation has affected the way students perform, the way teachers interact with their students, and the way Black men interact with their White colleagues. The review of literature supports these findings. Madeline

Will's (2019) article entitled, "65 Years after *Brown v. Board*: Where are all the Black Educators?" discusses the way integration eliminated 38,000 Black educators from the profession. This elimination of valuable Black educators continues to impact the racial disparity among teachers today (Will, 2019).

This research study indicates that there is an underrepresentation of Black men Arkansas schools. As revealed in the literature review, 91% of all Arkansas teachers are of European descent (White); 20% of students are African American, but African American *teachers* make up only 7% of the teaching profession (Goldhaber, Krie, & Theobald, 2014). The participants' experiences and perceptions show that their African American students do not have sufficient access to African American men as teachers even though they believe students will perform better as a result of adequate representation of quality teachers. As supported in the literature review, African American students are not given the opportunity to experience learning from African American teachers even though the achievement gap is narrowed, engagement is heightened, and high achievement is accomplished when students have teachers who are "racially" and culturally similar to them (Arcia, 2006; Casteel, 1998; Goldhaber et al., 2014; Perry et al., 2003).

Some of the participants shared that they were encouraged to or felt pressured to choose a career path that would earn them more money; however, almost all of them said things like it is more important to "make a difference" or "impact lives." They did not believe a more lucrative career path would make them happy, nor would it give them the opportunity to be able to do what they are passionate about. The men were resolved to become teachers. Many of them discussed that they wanted to be positive role models for

their students. They shared that underrepresentation of Black men in education led to

fewer Black men coming into the profession, which continues the cycle and lack of role

models in the profession. Most of the men agreed that when Black boys do not see Black

men as teachers, principals, and counselors, they don't grow up to become teachers,

principals, and counselors. The men agreed that education is not considered as a viable

career choice by Black men because of this underrepresentation. The men who were

educators in schools that had several Black educators discussed feeling like they

belonged and that they were a part of a group they could rely on to share experiences and

meaningful advice. This adheres to Cross' (1991) BRID theory, aligning with the

assumption that membership in a racial or cultural group is critical to an individual's

psychological and social identity as a result of the way society rewards and punishes his

racial or cultural group (Cross et al., 1991).

   Tokenism occurs. Tokenism is the practice of making a symbolic effort to

desegregate (Niemann, 2016). It is characteristic of hiring people from an

underrepresented group to give the appearance of representation (Niemann, 2016). Some

of the men in this study indicated that underrepresentation leads to tokenism. Participant

4 was one of only a few other Black man educators in his school. He shared that he

wanted to be treated like a contributing member of the faculty. He described it as wanting

his voice to matter and to be a representative for those students who do not have

consistent representation. Instead of being relegated to disciplinarian, he wanted to be a

part of the decision-making, curriculum development, and other meaningful ways that

affect the education of students. When this would not happen, he conveyed that he would

feel like he was a mere token in the school. He felt that without a seat at the table where

he felt invited and embraced for what he can offer, he is just a token Black educator. Participant 5 was also a member of a predominantly White faculty. He expressed that when his opinions and ideas at faculty meetings were disregarded, he felt that they only want him to be a silent, dutiful token member of the faculty. Participant 6 also shared an experience that supported the idea of tokenism. He was the only Black man educator at his school. He shared that his military background was used to justify his importance to the school. This act indicated tokenism as he was expected to help with discipline even though he was assigned a math teaching position.

Black teachers suffer isolation. The literature review for this research study indicated that some Black teachers feel isolated from the rest of the faculty (Frankenberg, 2006). This study's participants shared that having someone to identify with culturally boosts morale and their sense of belonging. This is supported by the BRID theory because it aligns with one of its basic concepts: the way an individual feels about himself is tied to his personal identity and the group with which society associates him (Constantine, Watt, Gainor, & Warren, 2005). It is also important to note that research showed that Black men who were educators in schools where there were one or zero other Black teachers in the building, feel uncomfortable or isolated from their White colleagues, especially with White women who predominantly make up the teaching force (Bristol, 2017). The Black men in this study who teach or have taught at predominantly White schools expressed that they tend to feel like their mere presence has to be justified, or explained, that they often feel excluded, and that their opinions don't matter. These feelings align with the literature review where the research shows that the African American men teachers did not feel as if they had a voice in policymaking, in contrast to

their White colleagues (Bristol, 2017). While the men in this study who worked in predominantly White school districts did not indicate that their White women colleagues feared them (Bristol, 2017), they did report repeatedly that their White colleagues sought justification for why the men were given their positions at the school (Bristol, 2017). It is during the *immersion-emersion* status of BRID that the men do not feel welcome to immerse themselves with their White colleagues. These men may feel that they are not welcome or possibly not even worthy enough to engage and remain in a conversation with a group of White colleagues (Cross et al., 1991).

The Black Man Educator: Disciplinarian or Sentimentalist

As indicated in the literature review, this study shares that Black men are expected to be disciplinarians in schools. They are often expected to be "the muscle" during student physical altercations, which was not a surprising finding in this study. Black men educators are often given this task in addition to their teaching responsibilities or even if they are not in an administrative role (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brown & Butty, 1999; Lindsay & Hart, 2017). They are called by students, colleagues, and administrators to help with physical altercations (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brown & Butty, 1999; Lindsay & Hart, 2017). One teacher even shared that not only will he be called out of his classroom to help with discipline situations, but he has even been called from the restroom. This view of Black men as "the muscle" is supported by BRID theory, which relates that society sees Black men as intimidating (Cross et al., 1991).

Despite the perception of needing to be the disciplinarian, intensely masculine, or "the muscle," the Black men in this study revealed they are actually sentimental. This finding was surprising finding because it goes against the stereotypical ideal that Black

men have a tough exterior that also reflects a tough personality. This finding regarding their sentimentality contrasts societal views of men, especially Black men. Black men educators are actually very sentimental. Much like many teachers who express reasons for being educators, several of the Black men in this study indicated altruistic, unselfish reasons for being in education. Black men educators are not in education "to be millionaires," rather they cited reasons such as "caring for kids" and wanting to "making a difference." The literature review supports the finding that Black men make themselves mentors to their students instead of disciplinarians (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). The men in this study demonstrated their sentimentality with the artifacts they presented; most of the participants had saved mementos from their students that they described with fondness, recalling the impact they are making in the lives of their students. Thus, the men in this study showed it is a misconception that Black men are intimidating disciplinarians. The men even said of themselves, "We are caring. We are loving." While the literature review supports research regarding Black men as disciplinarians (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brown & Butty, 1999; Lindsay & Hart, 2017), there is no literature review support of this important finding that the men are so sentimental towards their students and openly express those feelings to others.

Implications

The implications of this research could inform and potentially impact the hiring practices and recruitment techniques for school districts across the state of Arkansas that have educators that do not reflect the proper representation of their school population. The findings of this research could be used by school districts across the state of Arkansas, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, college teacher

preparation programs, and mentoring programs for novice teachers. Findings also implicated the need for future research. The implications are detailed below.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this research study indicated implications for practice for in these areas: (a) professional development for teachers in understanding how to interact with Black students; (b) developing recruitment programs for K-12 administrators with the purpose of getting more Black men in the education profession; (c) developing professional development for administrators and teachers to value Black men as educators and not disciplinarians; and (d) developing courses regarding equity, representation, the history of Black Education, and cultural awareness for Colleges of Education.

Professional development for teachers in understanding how to interact with Black students. This study found that common mannerisms of Black boys and Black girls are sometimes considered disrespectful by their White teachers. Also, the Black men educators who are principals discussed that some White teachers overcompensate, enable, or ignore their Black students' behavior. They also shared that other White teachers have an extreme intolerance for their Black students, finding behavior issues where they don't exist. Professional development regarding interactions with Black students will be beneficial in alleviating such instances. Understanding cultural aspects will lessen the likelihood of falsely identifying cultural difference for behavioral issues and end disparate discipline practices between races.

Developing recruitment programs for K-2 administrator with the purpose of getting more Black men in the education profession. This study found that Black men

are underrepresented in schools. The participants expressed that when Black students *and* White students have Black men as teachers, their educational needs and affective needs are met. As a result, school districts must become involved in recruitment efforts in areas where Black men are underrepresented. This recruitment must target Black men for the purpose of affording them positions as elementary school teachers and classroom teachers across the various content areas.

Developing professional development for administrators and teachers to value Black men as educators and not disciplinarians. This study found that Black men educators are assumed to be disciplinarians and athletic coaches. As a result, recruitment programs should not focus on having more Black men take discipline-focused positions or to become athletic coaches. In addition, school districts should hold panel discussions and other opportunities to hear from Black men educators. At such forums, Black men should share their experiences for the purpose of bringing awareness and affecting change.

Developing courses regarding equity, representation, the history of Black Education, and cultural awareness for Colleges of Education. The findings of this study highlight the historical factors leading to underrepresentation and the effects on students and Black teachers. As a result, Colleges of Education at colleges and universities should offer courses regarding equity, representation, the history of Black education, and cultural awareness. Such courses will prepare future teachers to serve students of diverse backgrounds. Future teachers will have a knowledge of the history of Black education so they can use it to become better teachers for all of their students.

These courses will also provide opportunities for future Black and White teachers to integrate finally within the schools where their students are integrated.

Implications for Future Research

In order to replicate this study for future research, one could expand the scope of the study to extend to a wider range of participant demographics. For example, this study could be replicated using all Black educators or all Teachers of Color. It should also be replicated for use with teachers in school districts where underrepresentation is the greatest. This study can also be focused to hear the perspectives of Black men teachers in the elementary setting specifically. A future study could also examine Black men's decision to go into administration rather than staying in the classroom. More research can be done to understand how desegregation still impacts schools and Black teachers today and, in effect, Black students. Furthermore, a great deal has been said and written about the implication that desegregation had on students, but more research needs to be done regarding the experiences of the Black educator. More research can be done to determine the effects desegregation had on the Black community with the loss of the schools and teachers that were always so influential. More research can also be done to examine the training future teachers receive at HBCUs compared to the training future teachers receive at PWIs.

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Chapter Summary

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Participants in this study included 10 Black men educators in the K-12 public schools in the state of Arkansas. The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative study was to understand the perceptions and experiences of Black men educators who are underrepresented in schools across the state. The theoretical framework for the research

was the Black Racial Identity Development Theory (Cross et al., 1991) and included the use of individual interviews, a focus group, and artifact descriptions for data-collection. This study was guided by three research questions related to (a) perception about representation; (b) entrance and retention; and (c) responsibilities to education. Findings, which were detailed and discussed in this chapter, indicated that Black men educators develop a psychological racial identity as a result of the way society rewards and punishes them for being a member of their assigned race (Cross et al.,1991). Findings indicated the Black men's perceptions regarding (a) perceived reasons for underrepresentation and (b) the disservice of underrepresentation and the value of representation (c) positive influences and support of Black colleagues/educators, (d) altruism and a background of service, and (e) artifacts symbolizing the impact on students (f) advocacy and affecting change, (g) proving himself and having self-worth; (h) being a coach, a mentor, or an exemplar, (d) being perceived as a disciplinarian or the "muscle," and (i) "playing the game" of race, identity, and feeling included.

This chapter discussed the big takeaways from this study about Black men's perceptions about their representation, retention, and responsibilities to the K-12 public education profession. In this chapter are the findings related to discouragement from becoming an elementary school teacher; effects of underrepresentation; effects of desegregation that are still present today; and the sentimental Black man educator seen as a disciplinarian. This chapter also related the findings to the Black Racial Identity Development (BRID) and discussed how the lived experiences of the participants related to the tenets of BRID and its statuses/stages. (Cross, et al., 1991; Constantine, Watt,

Gainor, & Warren, 2005). This chapter concluded with an explanation of implications for practice as well as implications for future research.

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Appendix: IRB Letter of Approval

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

December 16, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

The Arkansas Tech University Institutional Review Board Chair has deemed the application for TeKyesha Anderson's proposed research, entitled "Representation of African American/Black Men in the K-12 Public Education Profession: Impact on Recruitment, Retention, and Responsibilities to Education." to be exempt under CFR46 104(d)(2) Research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the exempt categories defined by the federal regulations are given an exempt determination rather than IRB approval. Thus, no IRB approval number has been assigned to this study. The IRB approves for the researcher(s) to proceed with the class project.

Please note that, in the event that any of the parameters of the study change, the researcher may be required to submit an amended application.

Sincerely,

Wan Wei, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Member
Arkansas Tech University