A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE LIVED AND PROFESSIONAL

EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE INSTRUCTORS: FUNCTIONS OF THE

PRACTICES OF SCHOOL SYSTEMS

by

Thomas DeWayne Cash

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological investigation was to explore and ascribe meaning to the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators as functions of the practices (i.e., systemic policies and interactions with colleagues) of a suburban school system. The philosophical frameworks guiding this study were Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977) as they relate, respectively, to the effects of engendered racism and the implications of the invisibility and hypervisibility associated with being Black male instructors. The three related sub-questions involved (1) the contributing roles of school systems' procedures to the encounters of this group of educators (2) the additive impact of this phenomenon as a result of Black male teachers' interactions with colleagues and educational stakeholders and (3) meanings assigned to these experiences as related to race, racism, and tokenism. The data was collected via open-ended, semi-structured interviews, an analysis of participant-provided professional artifacts, and a focus group with select respondents. Participants' feedback was recorded via an electronic device and subsequently transcribed to ensure the accuracy of teachers' responses. Data analysis was conducted using the tenets of hermeneutic phenomenology as defined by van Manen (1997) to include epoché, imaginative variation, clustering of recurring themes, and ascription of meaning. Factors related to gender, race, racism, and the emblematic status of being a Black man were found to impact the ways in which male educators of color assigned levels of significance to their lived and professional experiences. The aforementioned analysis created the basis for findings and implications of the current study as well as recommendation of additional topics for future investigation.

Keywords: African American male teacher, Critical Race Theory, hermeneutic phenomenology, Tokenism

Copyright Page

Dedication

This manuscript is dedicated to the perpetual memory of William Jasper and Mary Effie Cash, two of the world's preeminent scholars who recognized the essential worth of a superior education. Their divinely inspired wisdom and matter-of-fact approach in rearing a family of 14 proved to be an invaluable contribution to their children's success. I am immeasurably blessed to call them my parents. My foremost aspiration is to ensure that my life honors the Heavenly Father and sustains the legacy of these two individuals.

This manuscript honors the love, friendship, and loyalty of the Cash siblings, my brothers and sisters, whose unwavering belief in my abilities has been a sustaining force throughout this journey.

This manuscript is devoted to my nieces and nephews of whom I am immensely proud. I trust that this accomplishment will serve as motivation and encouragement for the realization of their endeavors as well.

This manuscript pays homage to the professional commitment and relentless efforts of educators in Chesterfield County Public Schools (SC) who worked incessantly to guarantee that my classmates and I received a world-class education.

Finally, this manuscript is dedicated to all African American students who, notwithstanding manifold vicissitudes, elect to persist in achieving their academic goals. There are no limits to your greatness!

Acknowledgments

I am eternally grateful to God for His blessings, grace, and mercy. This attainment is evidence that I *can* do all things through Him.

I am beholden to my wife, Brooke, who has been my greatest inspiration, cheerleader, and editor-in-chief. We canceled or postponed innumerable outings to critique articles, collaborate on ideas for projects, review abstracts for literature reviews, and ascertain that disquisitions adhered to every portion of countless rubrics. She offered impromptu, yet reassuring, prayers of encouragement during times when they were most needed. No words will ever suffice to articulate my immense gratitude for all that Sweetness did to assist in realizing this feat. I resoundingly thank her for sacrificing this time to allow my aspiration to come to fruition.

I am indebted to Dr. Verlyn Evans and Dr. James Swezey, my doctoral committee, for their expertise, wisdom, and guidance. Their consummate professionalism in our interactions, posing of questions to stimulate my cognition, and words of inspiration have been invaluable during this experience.

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List of Abbreviations

Black Male Teachers (BMTs)

Call Me Mentors Instructors Students Toward Effective Role Models (Call Me MISTER)

Critical Legal Studies (CLS)

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

William and Mary Public School District (WMPS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

There are approximately 3.2 million instructors in the public schools of the United States, and teachers of color (i.e., men and women) represent 20% of this total (U. S. Department of Education, 2016). African American male educators have comprised only 2% or less of this figure for the last 20 years (Riser-Kositsky, 2020). By comparison, 51% of all elementary and secondary students in 2016 were reported as ethnic or racial minorities (Geiger, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The influx and matriculation of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and mixed-race students are projected to continue increasing between now and 2026 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Hence, the professional workforce is likely to remain significantly less diverse than the students they serve.

Black male teachers are underrepresented in all elementary and secondary areas of public schooling (Singh, 2018). One argument propounds the liability of this trend is the pervasive underachievement of Black boys who do not pursue post-secondary schooling of any kind (Dinkins & Thomas, 2016). Other researchers have advanced the notion that African Americans, especially educated men of color, now have access to careers that previously were not in existence or available to many minorities (Partelow et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2004). These vocations are also likely to be more lucrative than teaching, a financial consideration for rearing families and professional mobility (Partelow et al., 2017; Shipp, 1999; Smith et al., 2004). For these reasons and the perceived difficulty of teaching (e.g., classroom management, high-stakes testing, parental concerns), some teachers were found to discourage minority youth from entering the classroom as educators (Dinkins & Thomas, 2016).

The lack of parity between Black male teachers and black and brown students has given

rise to studies regarding the effects on student achievement (Gershenson et al., 2016; Grissom et al., 2017; Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Wright et al., 2017). Minority students who have at least one same-race adult in their schooling have shown increased rates of attendance, graduation, positive behavioral outcomes, and attending a four-year college or university (Hobbs, 2020). An African American student who has at least one teacher of color in grades three through five has a 39% decreased risk of dropping out of school (Hobbs, 2020). Warren (2020) reported that African American men tend to be assigned to impoverished schools in urban areas and lower-level courses. However, quantitative studies to affirm how such ethnic matching may change the mentioned trajectory are inconclusive (Easton-Brooks, 2019; Warren, 2020). Colleges and universities have instituted efforts (e.g., Call me MISTER) to incentivize black men to enter the teaching profession (Clemson University, 2019; South Carolina State University, 2019). Despite such endeavors, the country has achieved minimal success in diversifying its educational workforce.

The current investigation ventures to explore and ascribe meaning to the lived and professional experiences of African American male instructors in a suburban district in Maryland. Specifically, the interview questions elicit descriptions about variables in the decision-making process to become an educator, the primary roles of male teachers of color, and systemic efforts school districts should implement to attract and retain more of this group of educators. The participants' responses will hopefully provide a sustainable plan of action intended to address how African American males make meaning of their lived and professional experiences. Given favorable outcomes, the researcher will seek to collaborate and replicate these strategies in other school systems as well.

To affirm the merit and necessity of said investigation, this chapter provides pertinent

information regarding an overview of this concern. The background information provides a

historical context, offering insights regarding factors that have contributed to the paucity of

African American male teachers. Social considerations and implications for students in the K-12

sector are discussed in light of the lack of diversity among classroom instructors. Two theoretical

frameworks provide lenses through which to analyze philosophical considerations, the responses

of participants, and subsequent steps for school districts to remedy the studied phenomenon. A

statement regarding the author's motivation for conducting the study is provided in the section

entitled Situation to Self. The problem and purpose statements present detailed information

regarding the area deficient in the current literature, followed by the significance of the study and

its eventual benefit to school districts. Using a phenomenological approach, three research

questions are utilized to address the experiential nature of Black male teachers' lived and

professional experiences. A listing of frequently used terms and their definitions is supplied to

facilitate the reading of this manuscript.

Background

The phenomenon of the lived and professional experiences of African American male

instructors will be the focus of the current study. To provide a more comprehensive analysis, the

ensuing narrative will investigate this problem via historical, social, and theoretical lenses. Each

of these prongs will be considered as possible implications for this exploration. A historical

context offers insight into events (e.g., Brown v. Board of Education) that have shaped the

shortage of male teachers of color (Andrews et al., 2019). Social factors related to the

interactions between Black male teachers and their students suggest this factor serves to decrease

the number of these educators (Baldridge, 2017; Brockenbrough, 2015). Two theoretical

frameworks, Critical Race Theory and Tokenism, are introduced as possible, philosophical

explanations of the impending responses of participants (Bell, 1970; Kanter, 1977).

Historical Context

Lutz (2017) proposed that there were some 100,000 Black teachers and principals serving

the youth of color in desegregated schools prior to 1954. In keeping with heavier concentrations

of African Americans in the southeastern United States, more than 75% of this total was in the

same area (Lutz, 2017). The landmark Supreme Court decision, Brown v. Board of Education,

proved to have a decimating effect on the supply of minority instructors for decades (Bristol &

Goings, 2019). Other researchers (Ayscue & Orfeld, 2016; Brown et al., 2018) have argued the

nation has yet to recover from this professional devastation, as evident by the current and limited

supply of Black teachers.

The scarcity of African American male instructors, and teachers of color in general, has

historical roots in the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education (Andrews et al., 2019;

Rosenthal, 1957). Before this landmark decision, there were more than 100,000 Black teachers

and principals in the nation's segregated schools (Karpinski, 2006). Other figures have suggested

this figure represented 50% of all professionals of color in the U.S. (Evans & Leonard, 2013;

Ingersoll et al., 2019). Ministry and teaching were regarded as the two most prominent vocations

for African Americans during this era (Lutz, 2017). Redlining practices in real estate helped to

maintain separate facilities for education despite regulations suggesting otherwise (Gandy, 1962;

Haney, 1978). As a result, there were limited places where Black instructors could be employed

(Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). Other teachers grew frustrated at the disparity of instructional

materials, receiving second-hand resources from Caucasian schools for years (Fairclough, 2004).

The displacement of classroom personnel, assigning instructors to work in areas for which they

were not certified, and the refusal to allow teachers of color to work in integrated schools compelled thousands to leave the profession involuntarily (Lutz, 2017).

Since this historical climax, the nation has struggled to replenish an ample supply of Black teachers to coincide with the rising increase of these same students (Andrews et al., 2019). Although 52% of today's public school attendees are minorities, Black instructors comprise only 20% of this workforce (Andrews et al., 2019; McFarland et al., 2018). The advent of newly established careers and affirmative action now afford minority students opportunities to pursue more profitable options other than teaching (Gist, 2018a). Colleges and school districts have partnered to recruit and retain African American men into classrooms to fill this void (Clemson University, 2019; South Carolina State University, 2019). Nonetheless, there remains a significant dearth of teachers of color.

Social Context

The absence or presence of a same-race instructor for African American youngsters can have numerous implications. Students of color who have at least one Black teacher by third grade increase their chances of graduating from high school and attending college (Hart, 2020; Rosen, 2018). African American high school students are more inclined to take Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other upper-level courses when taught by a person of minority status (Hart, 2020). The challenge is that Black instructors, and overwhelmingly, Black male instructors are assigned to teach lower-level classes with disproportionate numbers of students with behavioral issues and learning disabilities (Hart, 2020).

African American students in classes with a same-race teacher have significantly lower rates of office referrals, suspension, and expulsion (Downer et al., 2016; Lindsay & Hart, 2017). This data suggests these students and their instructors may have social rapports that culturally

inform the redirection of misbehavior. A subsequent implication might be to offer sessions to all teachers regarding alternative means to redressing inappropriate conduct. Wright et al. (2017) reported that students of color demonstrated more favorable (as rated by their teachers) social adjustments in externalizing behaviors. Specifically, African American students were less likely to exert inappropriate comportment that warranted severe consequences in class or administrative referrals (Wright et al., 2017).

Hart (2020) suggested students of color may be socialized to accept subliminal messages of their race's inferiority when they have limited access to race-congruent teachers. Conversely, teachers in more rigorous classes can serve as role models to encourage more enrollment of underrepresented student groups (Hart, 2020). African American students also reported that ethnically matched instructors served to buffer stereotypes of their race (Bryan & Williams, 2016). In other words, these learners felt less inclined to feel they were embarrassing all persons of color when they did not perform as well academically (Bryan & Williams, 2016). Chernig and Halpin (2016) also posited the overall shortage of male teachers of color can socialize other races to view them as unprofessional, thereby perpetuating stereotypical perceptions of Black men often portrayed in the media (Bryan & Williams, 2016). Hence, when students experience ethnically diverse classroom teachers, they develop more objective, impartial perspectives of their surroundings (Chernig & Halpin, 2016).

Theoretical Context

For the current study, two philosophical frameworks will seek to elucidate the lived and professional experiences of male instructors of color: Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977). CRT seeks to examine societal matters as related to the influences of race and racism (Bell, 1970). Hence, this theory will seek to address if such factors are related

to the lived and professional experiences of Black male teachers. Tokenism (Kanter, 1977), for the purpose of this study, refers to the symbolic tradition of hiring a limited number of persons from an underrepresented group. The participants' responses may serve to indicate how this practice and associated factors affect their professional experiences as classroom instructors. These theories will be utilized to explore the perceived effects of ethnicity and the implications of the invisibility and hypervisibility associated with being minority members of their staff (Bell, 1970; Kanter, 1977).

Situation to Self

My motivation for conducting this study is a desire to learn more about the professional experiences of Black male teachers. Moreover, my ultimate goal will be to compile viable recommendations for school districts regarding the recruitment and retention of this group of educators. As a linguist and an African American man, I have long been a member of a small, professional group. All of my professional assignments were in schools and districts that had few African American males in the classroom. There are varied, pejorative messages that the media and other sources have perpetuated about black and brown men (Bryan & Ford, 2014; Bryan & Williams, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011). Trying to reconcile said images with intellectual experts who seek to help young people can be a challenge for some individuals. This manuscript endeavors to alleviate some of the mentioned concerns.

I was a secondary teacher who had the privilege of working with students of various socioeconomic groups before becoming an administrator. I, too, lived many of the encounters later discussed and mentioned in the related literature and frameworks of Bell (1970) and Kanter (1977). I felt the pressures of being a de facto disciplinarian of students, and at times, many of these individuals were not enrolled in my classes. Minority parents and community members had

extraordinary expectations that I would not only instruct their children, but also serve as a surrogate father to help address home-related issues. Other ethnic groups expressed apprehensions about my credentials, methodology, or how a man of color was so fluent in another language. As these concerns may have been rooted in race, I often felt a sense of loneliness as the sole, or one of a few, male teachers of color. Hence, another goal of this study is to bridge cultural divisions, initiate helpful dialogue, and proclaim the benefits of male teachers of color for all children.

I now work as a curricular supervisor of languages for a suburban school system. I am the only African American male who holds a similar position in the state. As part of my administrative duties, I visit colleges and attend employment fairs to recruit prospective candidates. Males of color have expressed to me numerous reasons regarding their lack of interest in becoming a teacher. I implore these young men at least to consider serving as guest speakers, on school committees, or as substitutes when they are not working. It is imperative that young people, especially minorities, see successful, professional people who come from similar backgrounds as they.

The interpretive framework for this research is social constructivism (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My interactions with the participants will consider their classroom environments and other experiences with various stakeholders. I will utilize a lens of interpretivism, striving to comprehend and ascribe value to the world in which these teachers live and work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I will also incorporate member checks and audit trails to co-construct meanings and ensure the accuracy of statements and responses to the interview questions.

My research questions and approach will align with the epistemological and axiological perspectives of a constructivist framework, respectively examining how participants distinguish

beliefs from opinions and how their lived experiences equate to values (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Although I have included theoretical considerations for the related literature, I will approach the

inquiry with the idea of manifold possibilities regarding the conclusions. For the former

consideration, the participants and I will seek to distinguish beliefs regarding their experiences

versus opinions. They will share perspectives about their encounters with stakeholders and

insights on whether those are unique to their race and gender. Values, associated systems, and

how these notions are manifested will address the latter concept in the actions of Black male

teachers, their colleagues, and recommendations for the school system. I also acknowledge my

own values that may align with many of the participants as a former teacher and will endeavor to

remain objective in not capturing my personal sentiments (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Problem Statement

The problem is determining how African American male instructors in the K-12 sector of

public schools assign significance to school systems' practices and their interactions with various

educational stakeholders. Efforts to diversify the teacher workforce while giving lackluster

endeavors specifically to recruit Black men, professional steering of African American males to

impoverished schools, and assignments to lower-level courses are among the deliberate or subtle

policies male educators of color have reported as part of their professional experiences (Barshay,

2016; Bryan & Williams, 2016). African American male instructors have also expressed their

interactions with various stakeholders (e.g., administrators, colleagues, parents, students) can

also be a function of the practices that school systems foster and perpetuate. Such encounters

have figured into how these teachers make meaning of their racial and gendered status as Black

men (Scott, 2019; Singh, 2018; Wallace & Gagen, 2020). The National Center for Education

Statistics (2020) reported that there are 3.2 million teachers in the nation, and persons of color comprise 20% of this total.

Current data is deficient and falls short in addressing strategies school systems could put in place to influence how Black male teachers could make meaning of their lived and professional experiences. In light of the aforementioned concerns, this study endeavors to gather insights from this group of educators regarding how their districts might consider practices to influence how they ascribe meaning to their current encounters. Special attention will be given to the first three years of their careers, the period during which instructional observations and evaluations determine if they will receive tenure status. Instructors may resign their positions during this time with minimal impact on their credentials. Likewise, districts may legally terminate said employment during the probationary status with or without cause. A joint effort between these two entities would seek to identify participants' responses regarding how they interpret their professional encounters, view systemic practices in light of the same, and how their interactions with stakeholders play pivotal roles in affecting their status as Black male educators.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological investigation was to explore and ascribe meaning to the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators as functions of the practices (i.e., systemic procedures and interactions with colleagues) of a suburban school system. At this stage in the research, school systems' practices were generally defined as procedures (e.g., extracurricular duties, assigned courses) (Baldridge, 2017; Barshay, 2016; Bristol & Mentor, 2018) of a school district and interactions with stakeholders (e.g., colleagues, parents, students) (Bristol, 2020; Bristol & Goings, 2019). More specifically, the

study will strive to discover how these experiences shape the participants' recommendations for strategies that should be implemented by the school system that would influence how this group of educators makes meaning of the said encounters. The theories guiding this study were Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977) as they respectively relate to how race and symbolic status inform the lived and professional experiences of Black male instructors in a suburban school system.

Significance of the Study

This hermeneutic phenomenological investigation has empirical, theoretical, and practical significance for Black male teachers, instructors of other ethnicities, students, parents, and educational stakeholders. The information herein listed specifically addresses these three areas accompanied by citations from the literature to asseverate the mentioned claims.

Empirical Significance

The predominance of empirical research on Black male teachers is qualitative and addresses the interactions of prospective and in-service Black male teachers with various educational stakeholders (Baldridge, 2017; Berlowitz et al., 2017; Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brockenbrough, 2015; Gist, 2017; Green & Martin, 2018; Sandles, 2020; Walker et al., 2019). Additional studies have analyzed the shortage and challenges in recruiting BMTs (Ingersoll et al., 2019; Singh, 2018; Scott & Alexander, 2019). Other research posited that these educators are routinely situated as the panacea for ameliorating the educational crises of African American boys and other minorities (Brockenbrough, 2015; Carey, 2020; Milner, 2016). The current investigation endeavors to depart from these themes in ascribing meaning to the lived and professional experiences of BMTs as implications that school districts can enact to affect this group of educators' encounters with colleagues and the community. Participants may likely

inform this missing area of the research—how school systems should address these concerns as a corollary to influencing practices and interactions with community stakeholders.

Theoretical Significance

Results of this study will have theoretical significance for researchers in higher education, university professors, leaders of school systems, and other educational stakeholders. Utilizing Kanter's (1977) Theory of Tokenism and Bell's (1970) Critical Race Theory, this manuscript will attempt to discover patterns and themes among the emblematic status of teachers as men of color, the effects of racism, and the professional experiences of African American male educators. Davis (2009) suggested students benefit from interacting with resources in which they can see themselves and readily identify. Similarly, these conversations will not only serve to initiate a dialogue regarding working conditions for this group of educators but will hopefully facilitate platforms to address the plight of other employees. The ultimate objective would be for all groups of teachers—along lines of gender, ethnicity, and other traits—to thrive in a school system wherein they feel valued and affirmed. Responses from participants, data analysis, and recommendations will inform how the tenets of these philosophical frameworks affect their encounters and provide subsequent implications for policy at the collegiate and school district levels.

Practical Significance

There will be practical benefits of this investigation for principals, school administrators, teachers, and community stakeholders. The data gathered will speak to the unique perceptions of Black male teachers as attributed to their race and gender in the classroom. Said awareness will inform needed changes in policies, practices, and procedures related to the professional interaction of colleagues and stakeholders' expectations of BMTs in their respective schools.

Participants' narratives regarding their lived and professional experiences may also inform specific recommendations for school districts regarding their decisions to remain in the classroom. This approach is significant in helping systems retain their current African American male teachers, use them as ambassadors to attract other educators, and replicate the success of said initiative with other school districts in the state. Moreover, the diversity of the teaching workforce will improve to mirror the demographics of the students served.

Research Questions

This study will focus on the lived and professional experiences of African American male instructors using a hermeneutic phenomenological research design. It will be informed by Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (1977) to ascribe meaning to reported encounters and how these issues are affected by systemic practices and their interactions with various educational stakeholders.

Central Research Question

How do school systems' practices impact the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators?

Some minority instructors feel compelled to do such work as they have traumatic, racialized, and gender-biased recollections of the injustices of their schooling (Bell, 1970; Gist, 2017; Kanter, 1977). Other teachers of color often grapple with choosing to become a teacher to combat educational inequities within their race and more lucrative opportunities in other fields (Pabon, 2017). This question seeks to address those considerations as implications for current practice and policy in the K-12 sector.

Sub-Question 1

How do the systemic procedures (e.g., assignment of courses and duties) of a suburban school district influence the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators?

Bryan and Williams (2016) reported that African American men are rarely assigned to teach gifted and other upper-level courses, thereby relegating them to being surrogate parents and disciplinarians for schools' most challenging students. These obligations may be rooted in expectations of these educators as persons of color and as tokens representations of the male gender (Bell, 1970; Kanter, 1977). This question seeks to explore factors school systems could consider for ensuring a more equitable approach to systemic procedures, thereby influencing their professional experiences.

Sub-Question 2

How do systemic interactions with various stakeholders impact the lived and professional experiences of African American male instructors?

Gist (2018b) proposed that Black educators face difficulty in creating professional, autonomous spaces that value the expertise they bring to the teaching profession. Said challenges may also relate to issues of race and racism (Bell, 1970) and their emblematic status as men of color (Kanter, 1977). As a result of this frustration, many individuals confront loneliness, microaggressions, and isolation in their school environments (Brown, 2019; Duncan, 2017). This question seeks to address what efforts school systems should implement, especially during the formative years, that may influence said encounters.

Sub-Question 3

How do African American male educators in a suburban school system make meaning of their lived experiences as influenced by race and racism (i.e., Critical Race Theory) and their gender (i.e., Tokenism)?

Normalized practices that involve race and racism may be a subsequent corollary to the broader umbrella of racial inequities in the K-12 sector (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevárez, 2017). One likely subset is the diurnal interactions that contribute to how Black male teachers, especially those who are scarcely represented on their staff, discern said interactions (Bristol, 2018). This question strives to examine categories of significance these educators assign to professional encounters they believe are rooted in gendered and ethnic backgrounds.

Definitions

Herein is a compendium of terms used frequently in the manuscript. The definitions and scholarly references that expand upon their definitions are provided below.

1. *African American male teacher, Black male teacher, male teacher of color (BMTs)* – a male who is an instructor in a public school in the United States and identifies as a person of African descent; these three terms are used interchangeably (U. S. Department of Education, 2016)

2. *Caucasian* – a person who identifies as having ancestral roots in one of several European countries (U. S. Department of Education, 2016)

3. *Critical Race Theory (CRT)* – the perspective that race is a social construct, based on the legal disparities of the United States, that serves to perpetuate the inequitable treatment of minority groups (Bell, 1970)

4. *Culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive practices* – teaching strategies that
   include, recognize, value, and affirm the experiences and livelihoods of various ethnic
   groups (Khalifa et al., 2018; Ortiz et al., 2018)

5. *Ethnic minority/racial minority* – a group of individuals sharing a common heritage and
   background that identifies as a group other than Caucasian or being of European descent
   (Geiger, 2018; U. S. Department of Education, 2016)

6. *Tokenism* – a theoretical framework that asserts members of a group who represent less
   than 15% of the total workforce may be hired as symbolic employees and purported
   efforts of inclusion (Kanter, 1977)

Summary

The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) has projected the influx of minority students in the country's public schools will continue to increase one to two percentage points annually between now and 2026. Those that serve in the teaching workforce for these youngsters, however, remain comprised mostly of Caucasian females with African American males consisting of 2% of this number. Call Me MISTER and similar programs with the goal of recruiting more Black men into the classroom report favorable retention of individuals trained in their programs (Clemson University, 2019; South Carolina State University, 2019). Notwithstanding such measures, these initiatives have not kept pace with the burgeoning increase of minority students in the K-12 sector.

While there has been a chorus of research focusing on the challenges and experiences of Black male teachers, little to no studies have centered on specific techniques school systems can implement during the formative years of Black male teachers. Hence, the identified problem in the study strives to gain insights regarding the same based on participants' narratives about their

lived experiences as male teachers of color. Their recommendations, grounded in a posteriori experiences, will serve as a springboard to ameliorate such encounters, retain more Black males as classroom instructors, and replicate these techniques with other school systems.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of the current hermeneutic phenomenological study will be to explore and ascribe meaning to the lived and professional experiences of a group of African American male educators in a suburban district. More specifically, the goal is to consider strategies and techniques these educators perceive school districts could implement that would impact how these educators experience said encounters. Although numerous investigations address the stated phenomena associated with the mentioned instructors, few researchers have put forth specific approaches for recruitment and retention. This manuscript strives to add to the body of knowledge in augmenting the understanding the encounters of Black male teachers, their motivations for entering the profession, and perceptions of their interactions with various stakeholders. The ensuing findings will thereby fill the aforementioned gap in the empirical data.

A review of empirical data was undertaken to examine the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators. Specifically, this manuscript seeks to examine systemic changes that school districts can implement that may positively or adversely affect how this group of educators makes meaning of said encounters. Two theories that have shaped this research—Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977)—will be discussed to provide a conceptual framework for the ensuing findings and recommendations. The following section will provide a historical overview of the state of Black educators during and immediately after the landmark decision, Brown v. Board of Education. This information is followed by a review of the current literature relevant to the topic of investigation. Pertinent research will explore studies regarding classroom and teaching expectations of male teachers of color, challenges in recruitment and teacher education programs, school-based roles as de facto

disciplinarians, and their professional interactions with various stakeholders. The summary addresses what is known about this topic in the current research and identifies a gap in the literature—how the systemic initiatives of a school district may adversely or positively affect how this group of educators' interprets significance of professional encounters—thereby affirming the need for the current study.

Theoretical Frameworks

Abend (2008) put forth that a theoretical framework is a prevailing assertion or system of reasonably connected propositions that establishes a connection between two or more variables. Moreover, a theory provides a means by which to analyze, clarify, or describe a social phenomenon (Wacker, 1998). Said delineation should offer potential solutions that practitioners may apply to solve real-world problems (Abend, 2008). Using such guidance, this manuscript endeavors to explore correlations between the lived experiences of African American male instructors in a suburban school system and the tenets of two guiding philosophies, Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977). The fundamental inquiries will pertain to the unique nature of BMTs existing in a workforce dominated by females and various ethnicities, and how these factors affect this group of educators' attrition and retention in the teaching profession.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an offshoot of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), a framework credited to Derrick Bell (1970) that endeavors to redress judicial wrongdoings affecting African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native American citizens. Broadly speaking, CRT asserts that hegemonic and racist policies served to establish this nation, and the remnants of such inequities remain present in today's society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Bracey, 2015; Delgado et

al., 2017; Sandles, 2020). Indentured servitude, slavery, and hierarchical structures served not only as gratuitous labor to construct many of the structures in the fledgling colonies, but these notions also served as social constructs by which these same persons were relegated to an inferior class (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Legislative rulings, Bell (1970) argued, have played a significant role in this factor by creating policies that perpetuated the power of superior groups over marginalized persons (e.g., Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Education).

CRT strives to achieve racial equilibrium, social emancipation of minority groups, and practices that will afford all persons the ability to achieve their fullest potential based on equality of opportunities (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Those, however, who subscribe to Critical Race Theory are skeptics, believing that hegemonic principles will always dominate the way of living in this country (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). Whether these actions are covert, subtle, or microaggressions of which persons are genuinely unaware, these endemic actions have an irreversible and historical foundation in this country (Bell, 1970; Gillborn et al., 2017). Hence, Delgado and Stefancic (1998) put forth that work grounded in this theoretical framework should seek ways to educate persons on how best to manage these symptoms of a much greater illness.

As a corollary to hegemony, critical race theorists promulgate the notion that landmark decisions and sweeping reformation are put in place to satiate the needs of the dominant members of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998). Delgado and Stefancic (1998) illustrated the case of Brown v. BOE as an example. Testing requirements, refusals of integrated schools to hire persons of color, and out-of-content area assignments for others caused a historically epic proportion of African American educators to lose their positions in the 1950s (Lutz, 2017). Redlining practices in real estate maintained separate facilities for education despite regulations suggesting otherwise, Black minority students no longer had same-race role models in many

places of de facto segregation, and institutions for students of color received secondhand

instructional materials from their counterparts for years (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998; Lutz,

2017). Hence, CRT is a viable and scholastic means to redress the endemic nature of

marginalization, an invaluable appreciation of diversity as opposed to a monolithic culture, and

the perpetual effects of the aforementioned legislative policies (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Demoiny and Botzakis (2017) posited that race is a social construct created to

discriminate between superior and inferior groups of persons. Globally, civilizations associated

the physical characteristics and bodily features of persons of color with a lack of intelligence

(Montoya, 2018). Scientific fields worked to corroborate the biological validity of these notions,

but to date, these efforts have been widely repudiated (Agosto et al., 2019; Demoiny & Botzakis,

2017). Bell (1970) grappled with similar issues in his analysis of how this country has dealt with

issues of ethnicity. The prevalence of miscegenation, for instance, was widespread during the era

of slavery, and thus, rare is the person whose consanguineous roots are of a single origin (Brown,

2018; Edwards, 2016). However, many of these same Caucasian men were proponents of

measures to ascertain the 'purity' of their race (Bell, 1970). Political efforts were instituted to

maintain the separation of ethnic groups in creating nomenclatures such as octoroon, mustee, and

others (Bell, 1970). Although not genetically infallible, persons whose phenotypes appeared to

be of a certain color suffered the injustices associated with the lower class (Bell, 1970).

These remnants of discrimination and oppression are not cultural vestiges, but they

remain as fundamental portions of the American fiber in contemporary society (Agosto et al.,

2019). Bell (1970) advocated that these ideas are grounded in the principles of intersectionality

and anti-essentialism. Specifically, race and racism converge with other ideologies such as

feminism, ableism, and sexism (Bell, 1970). Critical Race Theory subscribes to the notion of an

interdisciplinary approach to race-related issues and places an invaluable worth on the importance of storytelling (Stovall, 2016). The plight of victims is veracious and more meaningful when shared from their perspectives, not spun by the imaginative creations of those who have inflicted such harm (Ford, 2020). Persons are encouraged to narrate their lived experiences as a springboard for dialogue and to minimize the impact of oppression on all members of society (Bell, 1970).

Bell's (1970) principle of converging is also a theme that Ledesma and Calderón (2015) illustrated as part of the origin of Critical Race Theory. Much like the premises of hegemony and racial realism, this idea propounds that favorable outcomes for minorities in this country are often complemented with tantamount measures for those in power as well (Bell, 1970). Some elite institutions of higher learning that are predominantly Caucasian accept minority students, provided needed supports, and ensure their graduation as tools of marketing to display their diversity and receive associated funding (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Ledesma and Calderón also drew upon Bell's (2008) work to mention that many such collegians also report lived experiences while attending these colleges that are at the epicenter of what Critical Race Theory seeks to eradicate.

Ledesma and Calderón (2015) admonished that scholarship rooted in CRT must ensure it commingles theoretical principles with viable recommendations for practitioners. Specifically, CRT work must not become obsessed with storytelling that relies exclusively on emotions, claiming a status of victim purely due to race, and current political climates. Research grounded in CRT should evaluate experiences through the lens of race, racism, and hegemony, but they should also seek to remedy these concerns in a way that pushes educators closer to an equitable status for all groups of persons (Bell, 1970; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Critical Race Theory

provides a theoretical framework to initiate conversations with male teachers of color regarding their lived and professional experiences in a school system. These discussions regarding the mentioned tenets and how they have figured into their daily encounters with colleagues, their collegiate preparation to become a teacher, and more importantly, how their school district can implement practices to influence how Black male teachers make meaning of systemic practices and their interactions with colleagues in the profession are at the core of the current study.

To examine the plight of African American male instructors via the lens of racism as a historical construct would serve objectively to begin conversations regarding how best to mitigate some of these concerns. Johnston-Guerrero (2016) and Lutz (2017) suggested that myopic perspectives surrounding the plight of minority groups often elude the quintessential reasons that govern such behaviors. Hence, the exploration of these issues to ameliorate the lived experiences of male teachers of color is an opportune concern. The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) has reported the nation's students are becoming increasingly more diverse; yet, the teaching workforce remains predominantly Caucasian and female. The current study endeavors to utilize precepts of Critical Race Theory to examine issues of race, racism, and gender-related concerns that may influence this group's interpretation of their lived and professional experiences.

Theory of Tokenism

Kanter's (1997) seminal work on gender in an industrial corporation, *Men and Women of the Workplace*, sought to investigate the commercial encounters of ladies as related to their counterparts. Drawing upon Laws' (1975) examination of females who pursued careers in the academic arena, the former publication explored the roles of non-male employees as emblematic representations (Kanter, 1977; Zimmer, 1988). Tokenism involves the hiring of personnel who

meet (and often exceed) the minimal requirements for given positions. However, these individuals lack the supplementary characteristics (e.g., sex, ethnicity, phenotype) to permeate insular circles to become fully acclimated to the culture of an enterprise (Zimmer, 1988). Hewstone et al. (2006) designated these employees as "tokens in the tower" (p. 509).

While exploring a firm that had recently begun to integrate females into its managerial ranks, Kanter (1977) proposed that women were few in number, symbolic tokens, and essentially diminished in importance. This isolated status created an environment in which ladies were invisible, yet highly visible at the same time. The apparent and physical contrast to the majority rendered these persons as noticeable, especially during work-related missteps (Hewstone et al., 2006; Kanter, 1977). Corporate recommendations overwhelmingly represented the interests of the majority, and hence, the voices of women were elusive to the process. Such pressures create a dichotomy of work performance. Some exceed the job's requirements while others underperform due to the numerous stresses with which they contend (Kanter, 1977; Zimmer, 1988).

Tokenism, nonetheless, has implications for any number of underrepresented demographics (Cohn, 2009; Kanter 1977). Black male teachers are subjected to similar circumstances, and like women, they also suffer from boundary heightening (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Kohli, 2016; Toldson, 2018; Zimmer, 1998). This tendency of the dominants to overstate the differences of tokens excludes minorities from informal interactions that create upward mobility. Persons of color often resort to acceptance of their external status (i.e., an outsider, stranger) or assimilation with others to find a professional niche for survival (Barber, 2004). Kanter (1977) suggested that a group must have critical mass (i.e., more than 15% of the total workforce) to escape invisibility and powerlessness. Otherwise, tokens receive accolades for

their race or gender as opposed to being acknowledged for their individual accomplishments. Tokens then have relegated positions that prohibit vertical or horizontal movement, forcing them to remain in 'prescribed places' for the duration of their careers (Kanter, 1977).

Cohn (2009) investigated the intersection of race and gender as discriminatory baselines in the workplace. The text uses several theoretical frameworks to grapple with the issues of racial and gendered disparities in rates of compensation. Cohn (2009) suggested that this differential, like other issues in the workplace, is at the exclusionary hands of Caucasian men, persons who tend to be the highest wage earners in the corporate sector. Hence, this discussion lends itself to how these practices may offer insights regarding the isolated, lived, and professional experiences of male teachers of color. The notion of tokenism has similar implications for BMTs who are minorities in the teacher workforce and frequently underrepresented in their buildings (Bristol, 2018).

Hewstone et al. (2006) endeavored to analyze the effects of gender ratios drawing upon Kanter's (1977) notion that tokens experience three interactive dynamics: visibility, polarization, and assimilation. Members of a small sector (i.e., race or gender) will inevitably be more conspicuous, and these persons can be made to feel they are different in numerous ways. This unique status can create the need to perform at extremely high levels or underperform as persons feel compelled to represent their entire demographic (Hewstone et al., 2006; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998). Hewstone et al. (2006) posited that these feelings of difference lead to polarization from the dominant group which in many cases contributes to assimilation for professional survival. Other tokens opt to remain polarized and subsequently suffer the consequences of boundary heightening, akin to the glass ceiling in the corporate sector, and remain in constricted areas for the duration of their tenure (Hewstone et al., 2006).

Hewstone et al. (2006) and Yoder (1991) further explained that although Kanter's (1977) seminal work and related studies have focused mostly on gender diversity issues, these same principles are applicable to any other group that is underrepresented. McIntosh (2020) expressed that Caucasians possess ethnic properties that endow them with privileges that are not afforded to African Americans. Furthermore, many such liberties are not available to Blacks who were formerly property and have been converted into citizens. Black men in the teaching profession are precluded from such favors as they are a double minority in their workforce. Barriers to promotions, seclusion from insular conversations, and racial indignities are experiences that Ladson-Billings and Gilborn (2004) described as taking a toll on persons of color. Hence, the tenets of this framework will seek to explicate the token status of Black male instructors as the singular and few representations of male teachers of color on their school staffs and in their educational communities.

Historical Overview of the Experiences of Black Male Teachers

Hanson and Quintero (2018) put forth that many teachers of color, via subtle measures or deliberate means, are currently guided to low-performing schools with high numbers of academically low-performing minority students (Randolph & Robinson, 2017; Staples, 2017). Ethnic matching, pairing young scholars with teachers of the same racial origin, purportedly serves as a source of student emulation and to ameliorate the educational injustices imparted by years of inequitable practices in schooling (Barshay, 2016; Milner, 2020; Redding, 2019). Hence, these errant notions depart from efforts to diversify the teaching workforce, minimize the importance of all learners seeing persons of various backgrounds in professional capacities, and perpetuates de facto segregation in the K-12 sector (Bartz & Kritsonis, 2019; D'Amico et al., 2017; Wells et al., 2016). The stated phenomena are reminiscent of the plight of African

American instructors during the era preceding Brown v. Board of Education, a period marked by an abundance of Black classroom and administrative professionals (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Farinde et al., 2016). Several of such individuals were assigned to teach outside of their areas of expertise as a precursor to dismissal on the grounds of incompetence, relegated to working in predominantly African American or sub-standard environments, or summarily terminated from their employment (Lutz, 2017; Rogers et al., 2013). The aftereffects of this landmark decision began to decimate the supply of minority instructors and principals, an aberration hitherto to be sufficiently redressed (D'Amico et al., 2017; Massey & Tannen, 2016; Staples, 2017).

Sions and Coleman (2019) estimated that there were several thousand teachers of color in the South prior to mandated integration in 1954. This figure reportedly accounted for more than half of all African American professionals in the United States (Lutz, 2017; Will, 2019). Of this number, several thousand were men who served as school-based administrators or classroom instructors. Randolph (2004) chronicled that in some states, the collective faculty of segregated buildings had more graduate credentials than their Caucasian equivalents in other schools. Given that education was one of the few unrestricted paths for Blacks, their social positions within the community extended beyond the schoolhouse to include notable positions in civic organizations, pillars of the religious communities, and role models for young scholars (Lutz, 2017; Sions & Coleman, 2019). The stated era, during which the Black male presence was a normalized concept in schools, would be short-lived, however, in large part due to racist practices (e.g., testing requirements, lower compensation than their Caucasian counterparts) that forced these individuals into other professions (Bond, 2015; Tillman, 2004; Will 2019).

Adhering to principles put forth by W. E. B. DuBois, a noted scholar and founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, many African American

communities believed they were better off maintaining their own communities wherein they had access not only to educational systems, but other services such as Black-owned grocery stores, newspapers, restaurants, and movie theaters. DuBois (1973) portentously expressed the concomitant outcome of Brown v. Board of Education—the rarity and eventual disappearance of Black teachers (Sandles, 2020). The casualty of numerous educators of color caused minority students to have less access to high-quality curricula and pathways to collegiate admissions, especially historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) (Sions & Coleman, 2019). BMTs served and were viewed as de facto disciplinarians, surrogate fathers, and community activists, many of the roles now disavowed and seen as burdensome by contemporary educators (Randolph, 2004; Sandles, 2020). However, many of these educators embraced such responsibilities to provide guidance to minority students regarding how to navigate the racial injustices of this country and accelerate their professional mobility (Sandles, 2020).

Lutz (2017) estimated that close to 40,000 African American teachers (i.e., men and women) lost their teaching positions in the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education. Slightly more than 80,000 persons of color worked in this profession throughout the country during segregation (Fultz, 2004). HBCUs, before this court decision and into the early 1970s, graduated the vast majority of teachers of color; however, these same institutions years later reported admitting nearly half the number of such students (Foster, 1997). Contemporary factors such as declining rates of completion for high school, college graduates who opt to pursue more lucrative fields, rejection of the magnitude of responsibilities associated with teaching, and other elements herein considered are among the reasons Black men are conspicuously absent from many of the nation's classrooms (Sandles, 2020).

Related Literature

There is a burgeoning body of research that treats the subject of African American males in the teaching profession. The preponderance of such investigations explores the paucity of men of color in education, endeavoring to provide explanations for this scarcity and pragmatic measures for making the vocation more appealing to a more widespread breadth of professional men. Numerous researchers have grappled with socioeconomic inequities that are arguably applicable not just to Black men, but more broadly to marginalized and minority populations. Given this focus on educational disparities, scholars have proposed alternative methods to licensure, preparing BMTs for more rigorous assignments (e.g., gifted classes, Advanced Placement), and efforts to assuage the responsibilities of discipline and surrogate fatherhood that tend to be the ancillary duties of male teachers of color. The empirical research examined for this manuscript is categorized into six headings—expectations for teaching, recruitment and teacher education, roles as de facto disciplinarians, masculinity and hypersexuality, surrogate fatherhood, and professional interactions.

Whereas the mentioned studies examine numerous topics regarding men of color in education, the current research is deficient in examining specific measures school systems could implement to affect how this group of instructors makes meaning of district practices and interactions with various stakeholders. The current manuscript seeks to fill this void via ascribing meaning to the lived and professional experiences of Black male instructors in a suburban school system and proposing tactical suggestions regarding the same. Specifically, the responses of participants and their recommendations will hopefully be utilized to inform collaborative practices for the Division of Human Resources and other offices to attract and retain African American male educators. This section provides a synthesis of the extant research, missing

components from select studies, and finally a rationale for investigating the stated research problem.

Expectations of Black Male Teachers

Woodson and Bristol (2020) asserted the notion of expectations for male teachers of color is laden with complexities, often manifesting as intersections between personal, social, and professional identities. Some Black male teachers perceive their roles to encompass manifold duties as assigned (e.g., disciplinarian, athletic duties, surrogate fatherhood), thereby devaluing their academic prowess (Baldridge, 2017; Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brockenbrough, 2015; Sandles, 2020). Other male teachers of color have reported an instructional overload wherein they are tasked with formulating a catholicon to remedy all educational problems that affect minority students (Alvarez, 2017; Brown et al., 2018; Callender, 2018). The subsequent sections expound upon three groupings of empirical literature related to expectations of male teachers of color.

Expectations for Teaching

African American and Latino males disproportionately represent numerous educational measures that equate to the lack of academic progress (Carey, 2020). These groups are more likely to be overrepresented in special education, suspended or expelled from school, not enrolled in rigorous courses, and other unfavorable metrics (Noguera, 2012; Warren et al., 2016). Scholars have argued that ethnic matching, working to ensure that students, especially minorities, have at least one same-race instructor can have a positive impact on marginalized students (Banerjee, 2019; Gershenson et al., 2016; Grissom et al., 2015; Kokka & Chao, 2020; Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Redding, 2019; Taysum & Ayanlaja, 2020). These young scholars have shown decreased rates of behavioral referrals and improved literacy skills, but investigations

differ regarding what extent teachers of other races may provide similar benefits to such students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Downer et al., 2016; Egalite et al., 2015; Rasheed et al., 2019). Hence, many school districts recruit male teachers of color to serve not only as facilitators of academic content, but surrogate parents to remedy the mentioned concerns (Baldridge, 2017; Carey, 2020; Milner, 2016). Other researchers challenged this notion in suggesting such numerous expectations of BMTs are not only unrealistic, but they also contravene the natural demeanor of many men of color who might consider the teaching profession (Brockenbrough, 2015; Woodson et al., 2020).

Expectations and Professional Assignments

Prior to Brown v. BOE, teachers of color were recruited exclusively to work with Black students in underprivileged schools that had minimal resources (Loder-Jackson et al., 2016; Milner, 2020). Many of these instructors received less compensation than their Caucasian counterparts during segregation and afterward (to include when they worked in the same buildings/districts as Caucasians) (Sandles, 2020). Arguably, BMTs, especially those in urban settings, may feel they currently experience similar phenomena. Black male teachers, in other words, may feel they are insufficiently remunerated for their professional expertise and rectifying historical injustices.

Brown et al. (2018) maintained the work of teachers of color, especially men, is inextricably tied to race, racism. This responsibility extends to endeavoring to rectify the educational inequities that have long characterized the educational plight of this minority (Brown et al., 2018). Other researchers have argued that students' (i.e., of all races) equal access to effective teachers minimize economic gaps, do not account for negative metrics among African

American students, and this phenomenon is not unique to African American students (Hanselman, 2018; Martínez, 2020; Morgan et al., 2016).

Black teachers, nonetheless, remain clustered in schools densely populated with Black and brown children from low-income families and work in poorly resourced schools and classrooms (Ayscue & Orfield 2016; Bohrnstedt et al. 2015). Khalifa et al. (2018) expressed that one such reason for this placement is a chorus of calls to address educational achievement gaps and the sociocultural needs of minority students, for whom it is believed that ethnic matching (i.e., between teachers and students) can serve to alleviate these matters. Whereas scholars have explored the breadth of the scarcity of BM's, few investigators have put forth notions to minimize said issues as intended solutions for recruitment or retention.

The notions of cultural responsiveness and teachers of the same race have been promulgated as means of providing students of color with role models and persons with whom they could readily identify to stimulate greater interest in school (Bristol & Martín-Fernández, 2019; Egalite & Kisida, 2017). Said principles have extended to instructors of other ethnicities and students such as Hispanics and Native Americans (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Hall, 2017; López et al., 2018; Nakaoka & Ortiz, 2018; Sánchez, 2019). While the mentioned studies suggested the needs of marginalized groups are not unique to African Americans, other researchers have cautioned the presence of a same-race professional alone will not remedy years of inequitable funding, policies, and sociopolitical issues that have adversely affected the education of minoritized youth (Bristol, 2018; Maddix, 2017).

These scholars proposed, among other considerations, that mindset regarding students' abilities and culturally responsive teaching must also be incorporated to make a substantial difference for these students (Canning et al., 2019; Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; Milner, 2016).

Alternatively, Baldridge (2017) and Brockenbrough (2015) put forth the expected classroom supervision of Black male teachers as disciplinarians contravenes the upbringing and inherent pedagogical approaches of many men of color. Hence, these instructors are situated to rectify circumstances for which they feel inadequately prepared.

Expectations and Tokenism

Widely investigated to address the challenges of women in male-dominated occupations, Kanter (1977) utilized the terms token and tokenism to speak to these experiences. Males experience greater benefits of upward mobility and career benefits in corporations wherein females are underrepresented in such positions (Schoen et al., 2018). Interactions of supervisors and co-workers would become normalized in viewing employees for their talents, irrespective of their gender, by merely having a more balanced workforce (Kanter, 1977). Zimmer (1988), however, suggested Kanter's (1977) research neglected the more seminal issue of sexism in the workplace. Additional research also insisted that hiring more women without addressing microaggressions, subtleties of discrimination, and other work-related issues will not suffice to resolve issues of their tokenism (Kossek et al, 2017; Watkins et al., 2019).

African American instructors, especially Black men, are professional minorities in their school systems (Bell, 2017; Gist 2018b; Green & Martin, 2018) and to a greater degree in suburban districts (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Jones et al. (2019) suggested that prospective BMTs, even those with graduate degrees in education, encounter difficulties before becoming teachers, seeking to satisfy perceived expectations of Caucasian and African American administrators in the interview process while simultaneously grappling with the notion of becoming one or the only Black male on the professional staff (i.e., the token). Other male teachers of color have reported hardships associated with being tokens or loners (i.e., fewer than three) on a staff of

predominantly Caucasian colleagues (Bristol, 2018; Bristol, 2019). Bristol (2018) also reported

that solely retaining more men of color, without tackling broader issues of racism, relegating

these educators to lower-level courses, and devaluing their disciplinary prowess will not serve to

address the plight of African American males in the classroom.

Zimmer (1998) discussed the idea of southern businesses hiring minorities or persons

from other underrepresented groups as proof of their ability to be inclusive. These tokens served

as confirmation of corporate efforts to diversify the corporate workforce, often at the behest of

the federal government (Zimmer, 1998). Moreover, the resounding implication was that only

these individuals were sufficiently qualified and deserving of such opportunities (Zimmer, 1998).

Bryan et al. (2016) put forth a similar plight occurs in the placement of Black males as teachers

of lower-level students in urban settings (Grissom & Redding, 2016). This same study issued a

clarion call for HBCUs and school systems to prepare men of color to teach not only in urban

settings, but also in International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, and upper-level classes

(Bryan et al., 2016). Said measure will provide role models for minority students, increase the

historically low enrollment of these students in such courses, and begin to alleviate the cultural

tokenism experienced by BMTs in these professional assignments (Ford, 2015; Ford et al.,

2018). In a quantitative analysis of male teachers of all races in the United States, Toldson

(2019) promulgated a significant departure from the notion of men of color are tokens. Colleges,

universities, and school districts should pedagogically equip all prospective instructors with the

needed tools to educate students from any background; such cultural competencies would

eliminate Black men's shouldering the responsibility to redress the racial inequities that have

plagued minorities in many areas (Toldson, 2019).

Recruitment of Black Male Teachers

Several researchers asserted the decimated supply of African American teachers is directly attributable to the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 (Allen, 2019; Bristol & Goings, 2019; Loder-Jackson et al., 2016; Meidl, 2019; Milner, 2020). Many instructors of color were summarily dismissed and not allowed to work in integrated settings, some were relegated to positions in buildings with inferior or limited resources, and yet a third group was assigned to work exclusively with Black students despite legislation suggesting otherwise (Andrews et al., 2019; López & Burciaga, 2014; Lutz, 2017; Will, 2019). Recent investigations have held that various factors influence contemporary decisions of Black males to enter the classroom and the challenges of those who do seek to enter the teaching profession (Acosta et al., 2018; Bristol & Goings, 2019; Cochran-Smith, 2016; Haddix, 2017; Pabon, 2016; Woodson & Pabon, 2016). This section endeavors to address said concerns.

Recruitment and Teacher Education Programs

Prospective Black male teachers have reported that teacher education programs, while avoiding issues of cultural competence, stress the delivery of instructional content and the means by which to do so (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Carver-Thomas, 2018). These individuals also perceived color blindness on the part of their professors and curricular voids that reflected the lack of their ethnic and racial experiences, and hence, they developed inadequate understandings of how to relate to urban students, professional assignments that most acquired due to not being hired in more suburban locations (Andrews et al., 2019; Dinkins & Thomas, 2016; Mitchell, 2016; Wallace & Gagen, 2020). BMTs further claimed that said placements for internships were diametrically opposed to the larger-than-life heroic characters they were to become as saviors for

marginalized and minority students in these school systems (Pabon, 2016; Woodson & Pabon, 2016).

Acosta et al. (2018) reported that colleges should redesign teacher preparation to include an interdisciplinary approach to teaching (to include ethnic and women's studies, sociology, anthropology, and history), a cessation of catering methodology to the majority of the country's workforce (i.e., Caucasian women), and lessons learned from segregation, an era during which African Americans had a significantly greater number of educational professionals. Not only must these measures take place to remedy the preparation of teachers of color, especially men, but due to the manifold negative metrics associated with minorities (e.g., overrepresentation in special education, rates of suspension), these efforts must occur immediately to begin to alter said trajectory (Acosta, 2018; Acosta et al., 2018).

Woodson and Pabon (2020) suggested that one likely contribution to the scarcity of men of color in teaching involves the racialized and engendered messages they receive about the profession as students in school. Pedagogical biases, norms, and strategies of preparing teacher candidates that predominantly favor the standards of European society and those of Caucasian women, obstruct the inclusion of cultural information that would make the teaching profession more appealing to persons of color (Navarro et al., 2019). Pabon and Basile (2019) concurred with this notion in offering that marginalization of minorities, prevalent at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), do a disservice in offering an urban preparation to persons who will likely teach in urban, impoverished settings. Student teachers of color also reported microaggressions (e.g., questioned about their content knowledge) from cooperating teachers and racialized experiences from colleagues (e.g., invisibility and hypervisibility) (Rodríguez-Mojica et al., 2020). Perhaps the most conspicuous implication is the conspicuous absence of African

American male professionals in the K-12 sector, therefore presenting a challenge for these students to become persons they have never seen (Bianco & Goings, 2016; Edelman, 2015).

Additional investigations have also emphasized the absence of the experiences of scholars of color in the literature that undergirds the teacher preparation experience (Cochran-Smith, 2016; Haddix, 2017). This critical phase of becoming an educator has reportedly eliminated training on issues at the intersection of race, class, and gender; the pre-service for most BMTs focuses instead on adhering to standards (e.g., national testing, state certification) that have little to do with urban students' backgrounds (Cochran-Smith, 2016; Haddix, 2017). As a departure from this perspective, Darling-Hammond (2016) put forth that there should be a national push to develop a compendium of strategies to define what it means to be an effective teacher—for *all* students—and the most feasible means by which systems can get instructors to replicate such pedagogy. This research has examined international approaches to schooling (e.g., Finland, Singapore) wherein standards for admission to teacher education programs are rigorous, training is provided to all individuals by a national agency, and the compensation is considerably higher compared to other professions (Burns & McIntyre, 2017; Campbell et al., 2017; Goodwin et al., 2017). Hence, every instructor is equipped to help students from various backgrounds achieve the highest academic standards (Darling-Hammond, 2016).

Lac (2019), unlike many other investigators, proposed addressing racism in preparatory programs via secondary pipelines. School systems should partner with universities to deliver sessions of cultural competence and fundamentals of instruction to teenagers to incentivize their entry into the field (Lac, 2019). Another group of subject-specific investigations (i.e., early childhood education, math, and special education) has explored means to rectify racialized practices endemic to teacher education programs in which there is a large deficit of minority

teachers (Boutte, 2017; Mintos et al., 2018; Trainor et al., 2019; Voltz, 2019). Stated changes are needed as teachers of color, especially Black male teachers, serve as exemplary role models to students of all ethnic backgrounds and are particularly well suited to utilize funds of knowledge in working with disadvantaged youth (Jackson & Kohli, 2016).

Burciaga and Kohli (2018) suggested one needed modification for Black candidates in teacher education programs (and current instructors) is an additional measure that evaluates their effectiveness. The Community Cultural Wealth framework, based on CRT (Bell, 1970), strives to reify the values these educators disseminate to students that enable them to persist, survive, and triumph in the midst of daily, racist encounters in various aspects of society (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). Although many instructors, African American and other minority groups, enter the teaching profession to disrupt and redress racial inequities that plague students who look like them, many teacher education programs disregard or suppress their life experiences as part of the curriculum as the focus remains on the majority of the workforce, Caucasian females (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016; Muller & Boutte, 2019; Picower & Kohli, 2017).

Recruitment and Challenges of Licensure

Despite clarion calls to attract more male teachers of color, researchers have found that Black men encounter racist hurdles in the process of securing such positions (Bell, 2017; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Other findings have indicated that taking steps to rectify the biased nature of licensure exams and alternative pathways to certification would serve to recruit more BMTs (Goodwin, 2018; Petchauer, 2016; Scott & Alexander, 2019). Yet, a different school claimed that revamping conditions of in-service teachers would be the most practical means of allowing these persons to serve as ambassadors to recruit other Black men into the

professions and thereby, minimizing their token status (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Bryan & Williams, 2017).

In an effort to address the paucity of Black male teachers, several tertiary institutions now offer programs that specifically target men of color for the teaching profession (Farmer & Hilton, 2017; Okezie, 2018). Many of these institutions offer mentoring, tuition reimbursement in exchange for a commitment to teaching for a period, and assistance with certification requirements (Clemson University, 2019; South Carolina State University, 2019). Some investigations have pointed to specific areas (e.g., special education, elementary education, early childhood education) on which IHEs should focus as these represent the areas where BMTs are most conspicuously absent (Jones et al., 2019; Meidl, 2019; Scott, 2019; Scott & Alexander, 2019). These efforts also serve to provide the needed role models and mentoring for prospective male teachers of color as most likely did not receive such supports in the K-12 sector that reportedly could have correlated to their persistence in graduating (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Farmer & Hilton, 2017). Additional research suggested the greater concerns facing qualified African American men are the discriminatory interview and hiring practices of school systems that are reluctant to offer them positions (Boyd-Swan & Herbst, 2019; D'Amico et al., 2017; Sparks, 2019). Specifically, teacher candidates have reported being asked to teach in content areas for which they are not certified, take on athletic duties in which they have no interest, consider placement at pay grades not comparable to similarly qualified colleagues, and consider assignments in schools with low-performing students (Bell, 2017; D'Amico et al.; Dantzler, 2018; 2017; Sparks, 2019).

Recruitment as a Function of Critical Race Theory and Tokenism

Wimmer (1998) asserted that the token status of various subgroups in the workplace is insufficiently addressed unless the ideological attitudes related to this plight are simultaneously rectified. Issues of race and racism that are endemic to this society and on which the nation was legally constructed (e.g., Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Education) inevitably have assigned ethnically and gender-related roles to minorities and women (Bell, 1970; Kanter, 1977). In other words, the emblematic duties that Black male educators must assume are a function of their limited presence in the school system and subconscious predispositions regarding their roles where they have been assigned to teach (Bell, 1970). These precepts—racism and tokenism— appear saliently in the recruitment of African American males into the teaching profession (Bryan & Williams, 2016; D'Amico et al., 2017).

Delpit (1995) expressed in her prototypal work *Other people's children* that teacher education programs should address and affirm diverse cultures of the students they seek to serve. The paucity of Black male teacher candidates can be attributed to discrimination, bias, and stereotypical expectations of their academic inferiority (i.e., victims of race and racism) (Andrews et al., 2019). Bristol (2020) affirmed this concept in reporting that male instructors of color described more positive relationships with colleagues, felt a greater connection to these individuals, and a willingness to remain in the teaching profession on staffs where there were more than three instructors who looked like them. Loners, persons who worked at schools with fewer than three colleagues of the same race and gender, conveyed feelings of isolation and detachment regarding their work environments (Bristol, 2018, 2020). Hence, these findings maintained Kanter's (1977) theory of numerical representation and taking necessary measures to confront job-related issues.

Several researchers have investigated the notion of hiring Black male teachers for specific roles, notwithstanding their academic prowess and subject expertise. Bristol and Mentor (2018) found that the charge of disciplinarian, not a purveyor of instructional content, is a prominent responsibility of BMTs. This perception exacerbates the idea of how other races learn to dehumanize minority students (a function of Critical Race Theory) as they watch their teachers unfairly discipline Black children and funnel them into the school-to-prison pipeline (Emdin, 2016; Hotchkins, 2016). In contrast, Bryan et al. (2016) and Lawrence et al. (2019) suggested the preparation of men of color to assume roles as teachers of upper-level students and in STEM areas where marginalized youth are not well represented, affording minorities an opportunity to see African American males in ways that contravene disparaging images often portrayed in the media and other sources. Given the dominance of females in early childhood education and the importance of role models in the formative years, Meidl (2018) suggested recruiting more Black men for professional assignments at this level.

Cherry-McDaniel (2019) expressed that assuming Black teachers are inherently capable of serving as cultural role models to students of color can be just as detrimental as the racism experienced at the hands of those from other ethnic backgrounds. Prospective teachers of color, for instance, deemed police brutality and treatment of minorities as justified in school settings (Cherry-McDaniel, 2019). Such beliefs, Curammeng (2020) argued, substantiate the case for ethnic studies, courses to examine the historical, sociological, and cultural backgrounds of the same groups of people in various locations. Green and Martin (2018) suggested efforts to diversify the collegiate teacher workforce as Black male teachers are primarily taught by persons whose experiences are vastly different from theirs, not addressing the backgrounds of prospective educators or preparing them for the urban settings in which they will likely secure

positions. Haddix (2017), however, recommended rectifying these concerns via hearing more of these educators' voices in empirical studies. Although the number of BMTs in teacher education programs is few, investigators should examine what factors attract and discourage them from the teaching profession to put actionable strategies in place (Haddix, 2017).

Other researchers have put forth alternative recommendations for recruiting and retaining African American males in the classroom. These techniques would also assist in redressing the token status of men of color and provide a means by which students would see more of these educators and in a more intellectual light (Bell, 1970; Kanter, 1977). Bryan and Williams (2017), for example, explored ways to attract Black males into early childhood education, a field overwhelmingly dominated by Caucasian women, to provide culturally relevant role models for children at the earliest stages. Instead of focusing on BMTs as primary agents to salvage minority students, Toldson (2018) recommended utilizing these educators to provide sensitivity training to other races regarding how to work with students of color, especially Black boys. Woodson and Pabon (2016) suggested that the use of BMTs as heteropatriarchal figures leaves limited to no room for expressions of their own sexual, racial, and gendered identities. Rejecting the aforementioned approaches, Darling-Hammond (2017) propounded a reimagination of recruitment and teaching as a venerable profession, admitting the most astute individuals, and equipping educators with the needed tools to assist all students. This esoteric approach would not only serve to rectify the lack of qualified staff, but it would also make the United States more competitive with other nations whose students perform better on standardized assessments and other measures (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Goodwin et al., 2017).

Black Male Teachers as Disciplinarians and the School-to-Prison Pipeline

In *Sambos and Minstrels,* Wynter (1979) explored an ideology that perpetuates the ideas of persons of color as inarticulate, shiftless, and incapable of living as civilized adults (Bogle, 1994; Leab, 1976). Hence, such thinking helped substantiate the need for paternalism and justified the atrocities of slavery as Black persons needed to be controlled (Leab, 1976). Comparable sentiments have governed the societal positioning of minority and low-income students as those who need to be fixed or rectified; Black male teachers are frequently situated in urban and impoverished settings to be their disciplinary saviors and redress other academic and social deficiencies (Baldridge, 2017). Instead of adhering to the tenets of university-endorsed pedagogy and methodology, Brown (2012) suggested that irrespective of the students' needs, the expectations for men of color are determined before they enter the classroom. Similarly, Warren (2015) maintained that Caucasian females, the preponderance of public school teachers, are fundamental in this role in that they are oblivious to the ways in which their privileged mentality (i.e., the deficits of others) materializes as desires to salvage African American youth.

The frequency of expulsion, suspension, and class removal for these youngsters occurs at disproportionate rates compared to almost every other group of students (Skiba et al., 2016; Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). This inequity manifests itself according to the descriptors of race, gender, disability, and sexual orientation; consequently, students of color who self-identify in multiple areas are likely to experience worsened outcomes (Barshay, 2018; Harper et al., 2019; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Romney, 2018; Toldson et al., 2015; Vincent et al., 2015). Several school systems have adopted zero-tolerance policies wherein (the interpretation of) disciplinary infractions such as threats and physical confrontations result in long-term exclusions from the instructional program, guidelines that have also have incommensurate results for students of

color in comparison with other learners (Berlowtiz et al., 2017; Hines-Datiri & Andrews, 2020;

Wun, 2016). Stated reforms, cultural sensitivity training, and other professional development are

essential to address these disparities and effects on the academic achievement of African

American youth (Cox, 2020; Davis et al., 2020; Gilliam & Reyes, 2018; Skiba et al., 2016).

Wallace (2020) posited that the perception of BMTs as the panacea for inappropriate

behavior of Black students impedes the development of these educators as department chairs,

counselors, school-based administrators, or for other professional capacities where there is even

a greater paucity of African American men. Notwithstanding such opportunities for promotion,

Pabon (2017) maintained that these instructors are overwhelmed by the notion of complying with

these expectations as this approach negates their pedagogical preparation and academic

expertise, focusing instead on race and gender. Brockenbrough (2015, 2018) concurred with this

precept in questioning whether Black men, especially those who were not raised with

authoritative figures, are even adept at taking on such an unfamiliar charge. Negotiating

relationships with students and engaging in culturally relevant discourse would serve as more

viable precursors to scholastic achievement not only with minority students, but learners of all

backgrounds (Anyon et al., 2016; Brockenbrough, 2015, 2018; Welsh & Little, 2018).

Gross and Lo (2018) stated the building of rapport with Black students, especially males,

is of critical importance as many of them may have experienced loss. Stated void could involve

an absent (not necessarily deceased) relative, lack of basic needs, or emotional supports; thus,

their behavior may not align with the expected norms of the majority population (Gross & Lo,

2018; Wilkinson, 2015). Researchers have documented the connection between socioemotional

health and academic success, the supports for which African American youth often do not have

access (Baweja et al., 2016; Perry & Daniels, 2016; Umberson, 2017; Wolpow et al., 2016).

Wilkinson (2015) also posited that Black male teachers who have experienced such encounters carry these sentiments into their teaching careers with a proactive attitude in trying to assuage similar experiences for other minority youth. Pabon (2017) recounted that such suffering (as adult professionals) may serve to counter excessive disciplinary referrals of African American students as well as discourage this same group of educators from entering the teaching field.

Some African American male teachers perceived their primary role as disciplinarian of insubordinate Black youth, and thus, contributors to a universal system of incarceration (Bristol & Mentor; Carey, 2018, 2020; Nelson, 2016; Wallace, 2017). BMTs also felt ill-equipped and lacking an elixir to handle such problems due exclusively to their race and gender (Baldridge, 2017; Brockenbrough 2015, 2018). Bryan (2017) asserted that Caucasian instructors, the majority of the teaching workforce, are situated to castigate minority youth at inordinate rates, and students of various ethnicities learn to emulate this behavior as they observe daily classroom practices. Kupchik and Alleyne (2017) concurred with this notion in suggesting there is a pervasive culture in many schools wherein all staff members, not just instructors of color, respond more punitively to minority youth when compared to White students. Black male students in Louisiana shared that teachers make use of other minority boys who are deemed successful as role models for those with behavioral issues, an approach that can have positive effects or pit individuals against one another (Grace & Nelson, 2019). Goings et al. (2018) rejected the assignment of this responsibility to Black male teachers, and instead, insisted that a broader approach must be developed by district leaders to educate staff regarding cultural sensitivity to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline (Chandler, 2017; Ulmer & Bradley, 2017).

Scholars have frequently argued the benefits of Black male teachers in ameliorating the academic achievement and social maturation of diverse students (Bristol & Goings, 2018;

Thomas & Warren, 2017; Warren & Bonilla, 2018). Other researchers, however, have expressed

apprehensions regarding how these educators are positioned to interact with students, especially

Black boys, as these exchanges may serve in hegemonic ways to exacerbate race-gender

oppressions (Brockenbrough, 2018; Warren, 2020). A founding premise of this nation was to

create and perpetuate meanings of racial inferiority to serve the economic interests of the

European majority (Bell, 1970; Kendi, 2017). Hence, these practices function to disseminate said

images in the mainstream media, fostering a normalized sense of the need to subvert the

intellectual potential and positive contributions of minority youth to society (Nelson et al., 2015;

Wallace, 2020). Male teachers of color whose dominant roles with these students are focused on

correcting misbehavior, as opposed to fostering relationships at the intersections of race, gender,

and sexuality, only exacerbate their underachievement and vulnerability (Lindsay, 2018; Oeur,

2018; Rhoden, 2018).

Black Male Teachers—Masculinity and Hypersexuality

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines hypersexuality as an

intemperate and excessive inclination for sexual gratification; this yearning may also be referred

to as satyriasis (APA, 2020). As elements of society have predetermined notions of masculinity

for Black male teachers that they are unable to negotiate, educational stakeholders recruit said

educators to fulfill this role, especially in their interactions with disenfranchised and minority

youth (Carey, 2020; Hasford, 2016; Smalls, 2018; Warren, 2020; Woodson & Bristol, 2020).

This responsibility encompasses areas of stringent discipline, lacking nurturing dispositions,

having illicit propensities, and objectifying females, thereby creating apprehensions regarding

their interactions with colleagues, administrators, and parents (Laing, 2017; Mosley et al., 2017;

Todd et al., 2016; Woodson et al., 2020). Bass (2020) and Bass and Alston (2018), however,

found Black male educators that saw their professional relationships as spiritually guided and felt the need to mask their inherent caring dispositions because of the community's stereotypical expectations.

Other scholars have commented on the inordinate dependence on BMTs to remedy the misdeeds of students of color, fearing such practice absolves other teachers from their responsibilities and creating African American students who respond to de facto parental agents as opposed to persons they see as intellectual role models (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brockenbrough, 2015, 2018). This group of educators remains scarce at the elementary levels, likely due to the inability to overcome stereotypes of their masculinity and hypersexuality in working with younger children (Davis & Hay, 2018; Moss-Racusin & Johnson, 2016; Williams, 2017). Although Pabon (2016) pointed out that school systems await men of color to be an antidote for all things related to Black youth, Love (2017) proposed that districts look beyond men (i.e., to women) and staff members of other ethnic backgrounds regarding how they, too, might fulfill these voids as relatable role models.

Black Male Teachers as Surrogate Fathers

As more students (i.e., of all races) see fewer examples of professional men of color, Hicks (2018) advocates that Black male teachers are befitting examples of somatic *otherfathering*. In other words, students benefit from seeing the African American principal, counselor, or teacher in bodily form even if there is limited interaction as these figures serve to contravene denigrating views otherwise perpetuated by the media (Hicks, 2018). Pabon (2016) concurred with this notion in suggesting that such monolithic perspectives of men of color as uninvolved fathers have helped to situate the de facto role of the Black male teacher—to be a paternal figure to the fatherless and those whom school systems have deemed as at-risk (Goings

& Bianco, 2016). Carey (2020) expanded the mentioned arguments in exploring how male

teachers of color must serve as disciplinarians, conveyors of heteronormative behaviors, and

hypermasculine role models, especially for Black males. Wallace (2017), however, offered that

promoting expectations of these educators as saviors and heroes functions to diminish the

school-level involvement of the biological parents. Utilizing the tenets of Tokenism (Kanter,

1977) and Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970), Pabon (2016) also posited that positioning BMTs

as homogeneous elixirs to improving schools does not account for the years of historical and

contemporary racism that impede this progress or the numerous African American men who do

not subscribe to stated and traditional characteristics.

Black Male Teachers – Interactions with Colleagues

Goings (2015) suggested Black male teachers work in environmental intersections of

hypervisibility (e.g., intense scrutiny) and invisibility (e.g., lack of recognition and

acknowledgment) due to their race and gender (Brown, 2018; Brown, 2019). As one likely

explanation, Bristol (2018, 2020) proposed this isolation may be exacerbated when these

educators are in a smaller percentage compared to their colleagues (Kanter, 1977). Other

researchers have maintained that BMTs are touted and utilized by colleagues primarily for their

ability to discipline students of color and at a lower level for their academic expertise (Carey,

2018; Wallace, 2017). Thus, other educators in this group shared antipolar anecdotes of co-

workers who deemed them as less than sufficiently prepared or overly competent in their subject

areas, causing them to feel like social pariahs (Bristol, 2018).

Numerous studies addressed the tenets of CRT (Bell, 1970), race and racism, as pervasive

and comprehensive descriptors of teachers' interactions with their colleagues in the K-12 sector

(Allen, 2019; Amos, 2016; Callender, 2018; Martínez et al., 2016; Pabon, 2017; Sandles, 2020;

Woodson & Pabon, 2016). Duncan (2017, 2020) researched teachers of color who readily embraced their heritage and deemed it their inherent responsibility to disrupt racism Black students and they (i.e., the teachers) experienced at the hands of other colleagues. In other words, they view themselves as ambassadors and advocates whose purpose, in addition to teaching, is to help students navigate and redress racially-based inequities (Bell, 1970; Duncan 2020; Flowers, 2016; Sulé et al., 2018). Dickens and Chávez (2018), however, explored how minorities engage in identity shifting, modifying linguistic and behavioral patterns to assimilate, in hopes of improving relationships with colleagues. Given the possible benefits and dangers of this strategy, other scholars have suggested the presence of not merely Black male teachers, but persons who are also culturally relevant and equipped to rectify racialized practices for the sake of students and other stakeholders (Bryan & Williams, 2017; Chang et al., 2020; Sleeter, 2018).

Summary

Manifold approaches have been taken to explore aspects of the lived and professional experiences of Black male teachers. Some of the recurring themes focus on the impediments with which this group of educators must navigate perceived expectations (Banerjee, 2019; Kokka & Chao, 2020), professional assignments (Loder-Jackson et al., 2016; Milner, 2020), teacher education programs (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Woodson & Pabon, 2016), and recruitment to the profession (Farmer & Hilton, 2017; Okezie, 2018). For each of the aforementioned headings, several investigators concur with the stated notions, whereas fewer scholars have put forth departures from the former findings. The vast majority of empirical data suggested a less than favorable plight as a male instructor of color (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Haddix, 2017; Jones et al., 2019; Pabon, 2016; Scott, 2019; Woodson & Pabon, 2016), a topic on which research continues to develop. However, very few studies appear in the extant data regarding how the encounters of

BMTs' experiences might be ascribed meaning that translates into recommendations for school systems. An effort to fulfill this gap in the literature via the lens of race and isolated status [i.e., the tenets of Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977)] will provide theoretical implications for systematic policies of a school district and practical means by which divisions of human resources may attract and retain more of this group of instructors.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The current hermeneutic phenomenological study sought to explore and ascribe meaning to the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators in a suburban school district. Specifically, the investigation endeavored to gather insights from the participants in four areas related to the paucity of male teachers of color: motivations for entering the teaching profession, perspectives about de facto professional responsibilities, the impact of interactions with colleagues upon these experiences, and efforts school districts should put in place to influence how this group of educators makes meaning of their professional encounters. The findings and recommendations of this research can provide informative data to educational stakeholders regarding the current state of Black male teachers.

This chapter substantiates the selection of hermeneutic phenomenology as a research design for the mentioned investigation. A detailed portrayal of the setting describes the school system in which the participants teach accompanied by tabular information with their demographics. The predispositions of the researcher are explained within the context of measures for data collection and scholarly justifications for the same. Following these sections is an account of how gathered data was analyzed while adhering to standards of trustworthiness. A summary recapitulates the contents of the chapter, focusing on the salient points of the prescribed methodology.

Design

Hermeneutic phenomenological research seeks to ascribe common significance to the lived experiences or phenomena of a group of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; McGrath et al., 2019; van Manen, 1997). The objective is not randomly to elicit responses from a diverse,

heterogeneous population. Rather, the researcher's purpose is to concentrate on persons who have encountered (or are thought to have shared) similar circumstances. This object of human experience, coupled with the participants' descriptions of the same, is the basis for creating a composite explanation of the quintessence of this phenomenon for all of the affected individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1997).

Phenomenology has roots in the writings of Edmund Husserl, a German mathematician, and philosophers such as Heidegger and Sartre (Neubauer et al., 2019; van Manen, 1997). This approach, widely used in education and social sciences, endeavors to ascribe meaning and implication to the embodiment of such lived experiences (McGrath et al., 2019). Among its defining features are the following characteristics: focus on a singular concept to be explored, the shared experiences of one entity with others, the researcher's setting aside (i.e., bracketing) of his narrative to focus on those of the participants, frequent use of interviews, and an expressive, descriptive passage containing how the participants view their encounters (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) posited that qualitative researchers may elect not to use a theoretical framework for an investigation. Phenomenology, nonetheless, aims to determine the philosophical underpinnings after constructing meaning of the participants' responses (McGrath et al., 2019). This exploration put forth two considerations—Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977)—as tentative explanations for the lived experiences of Black male teachers. The tenets of these frameworks serve possibly to elucidate and provide a better comprehension of the professional encounters of male educators of color. As the investigator and participants co-constructed the essence of their narratives, the accuracy of these assumptions will be reconciled.

The focus of hermeneutic phenomenology is to expound on details and inconsequential details of encounters that otherwise may be taken for granted (Saverty, 2003). Van Manen (1990), a qualitative researcher, posited that hermeneutical phenomenology aspires to decipher the transcripts of human interactions. Such inquiry begins with a presupposed and prevalent concern affecting a group of individuals who share some common characteristics (van Manen, 1997). The participants had opportunities to narrate their lived and professional experiences relevant to their interactions as classroom educators. The researcher then engaged in an interpretive and collaborative process to assign categorical meanings to these accounts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; van Manen, 1997). In accord with this guidance, this method is appropriate for the current study as the purpose is to converse with Black male teachers regarding their experiences and capture what strategies they recommend school systems should implement to affect how they make meaning of their professional encounters.

After identifying the participants for the current study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with this group of educators. These teachers responded to broad, open-ended inquiries that pertained to the research questions herein contained. The second source of data collection involved the investigator's collection of one to two artifacts they perceived to corroborate their lived and professional experiences. Third, the researcher requested that select participants take part in a focus group dialogue based on emergent themes from the first two sources of data. This conversation, as in the case of the interviews and artifacts, gave teachers an opportunity to share which factors affirmed, expanded, or negated their initial responses in the introductory conversation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that the triangulation of multiple data may not yield validity of information, but multiple sources tend to yield a more comprehensive and well-developed narrative (Denzin, 1978).

Research Questions

Listed herein are a central research question and three related sub-questions that will serve as guiding inquiries for the current investigation. Information sought in the methods of data collection will be aligned to these questions for the purpose of reporting said findings in the subsequent chapters.

Central Research Question

How do school systems' practices impact the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators?

Sub-Question 1

How do the systemic procedures (e.g., assignment of courses and duties) of a suburban school district influence the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators?

Sub-Question 2

How do systemic interactions with various stakeholders impact the lived and professional experiences of African American male instructors?

Sub-Question 3

How do African American male educators in a suburban school system make meaning of their lived experiences as influenced by race and racism (i.e., Critical Race Theory) and their gender (i.e., Tokenism)?

Setting

The setting for this qualitative study is a local education agency in the state of Maryland. William and Mary Public School (pseudonym), hereafter referred to as WMPS, is a district of approximately 45,000 students. WMPS is the largest single employer in a county of some

260,000 persons. The system contains 69 schools, 39 elementary, 13 middle, and 10 high. Additionally, there are three public charter schools that serve learners in grades K-8, a career and technology center, an alternative school for students who have committed severe, disciplinary infractions, a flexible evening high, and a specialized center for youngsters with learning disabilities.

Of the district's 45,000 students, 58% identify as Caucasian, and 43.5% are collectively classified as African American, Asian, Hispanic, and two or more races. Of approximately 3,000 classroom teachers, 66% are Caucasian, 34% are non-White, and in recent years, the system has had some 20-25 Black male teachers. Their professional tenures range from two to 25 years of teaching. Subject area disciplines are a mixture of MESS (i.e., math, English, science, social studies) and other contents such as instrumental band and special education.

At the executive level, the organizational structure of the district consists of a superintendent who reports to a nine-member publicly elected school board, a deputy superintendent, and instructional directors who supervise principals at the previously mentioned levels. The participants in this study fall under the auspices of an academic department (e.g., English language arts), and a principal or an assistant principal is their immediate supervisor. Given the increasing racial diversity of the system and the small percentage of BMTs, WMPS was chosen to examine the perspective of these teachers. The ultimate goal, again, is to recruit more instructors who mirror the changing and diverse demographics of the students they serve.

Participants

A sample in research methodology refers to people, groups, objects, or entities taken from a larger population with the hopes of generalizing findings to the population as a whole (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested it is appropriate to utilize

purposeful sampling when an investigation calls for individuals who can best inform about a studied problem. Additionally, this investigation utilized homogeneous purposeful sampling, selecting similar individuals who have likely shared the same phenomenon to provide information-rich data about their experiences (Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). All participants were African American male educators in a suburban school district. A purposive approach sought to include a range of teaching experience, persons from diverse academic disciplines, and teachers from more than one instructional level (e.g., elementary, secondary) with preference to those who have more years of seniority and have worked in multiple locations in the school system. It was anticipated that these instructors will have vaster, richer encounters to share as part of their lived and professional experiences. Combining purposeful sampling and a small number of participants (i.e., a minimum of 10) provided detailed information regarding the sample's educational encounters (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Warner, 2013).

As part of the district's IRB approval process, The Division of Human Resources of WMPS provided the names and contact information of all male instructors who have identified as African American. Electronic correspondence was sent to all persons (see Appendix B). This initial communication described the scope of the research, apprise persons of their rights, and establish a process for future meetings. As the number of volunteers exceeded the needed quantity, a minimum of 10 individuals was initially selected to participate. Two others were invited to partake as necessary to reach a point of thematic saturation (Saunders et al., 2018). A document of informed consent was e-mailed to all respondents to apprise them of the breadth of the investigations, their rights, and responsibilities (see Appendix C). Although the deliberate nature of purposeful sampling limited the respondents, Palinkas et al. (2015) suggest that purposeful random sampling minimizes any efforts of the researcher's effort to control responses

from desired individuals.

Procedures

A request to execute the mentioned investigation was submitted to the Institutional

Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University after the defense of the proposal (see Appendix A).

William and Mary Public Schools also required a separate application to conduct research with

its employees. No persons were contacted prior to securing approvals from both institutions. This

study will hopefully assist WMPS in achieving its stated goals of recruiting and retaining a

diversified workforce that mirrors the changing population of its students.

The Division of Human Resources provided names, content areas, and school contact

information for all instructors who identify as African American males. All correspondence with

prospective participants (see Appendix B), including an invitation to participate and interview

questions (see Appendix E), was approved as part of the consent from the Institutional Review

Board of WMPS. Three Black male administrators who have terminal degrees in education were

contacted via phone or e-mail to establish a time and place to simulate the semi-structured

interview with participants and conduct a pilot study (see Appendix F). This pilot-study

committee served to provide feedback and suggest changes to the verbiage of questions, structure

of the interview, and other topics of consideration. These colleagues had minimal suggestions

regarding the verbiage or structure of the questions. The primary reminders were to pose

questions in a manner that would allow for open-ended responses and to follow up with

questions as frequently as possible to elicit more detailed responses.

Copies of the approvals from the IRB at Liberty University and WMPS were emailed to

the identified Black male teachers along with a letter of consent. This information explained the

purpose of the study, methodology, structure of the interview, subsequent sources of data (i.e.,

interview, gathering of artifacts, and focus study), their rights to withdraw at any point without penalty, and steps to ensure their privacy. All persons were asked to reply within seven calendar days. As responses were received, the researcher and the participants determined times and locations to convene. The interviews, with the permission of the instructors, were recorded in Google Meet or by other digital means, to facilitate transcription.

At the conclusion of the interview, the participants were asked to share one to two artifacts they deemed as part of their lived and professional experiences as Black male teachers. The participants shared how they viewed these objects as affirmations, expansions, or negations of previously shared responses. These statements were transcribed (see Appendix G) as part of their replies to be verified in the process of audit trails, verifying the accuracy of captured information (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To gain additional information about similar and contradictory responses from teachers, the researcher conducted a virtual focus group with participants. One purpose was to elicit thoughts of the respondents about recurring themes and those are in contrast. This forum also provided an additional audit trail to verify the accuracy of the researcher's capturing of individual responses and an opportunity for persons to share perspectives that may not have been otherwise expressed. Pseudonyms were used for all participants. Information was securely stored as required by Liberty University and WMPS.

In qualitative research, verification refers to the proactive and ongoing mechanisms used to ensure reliability and validity and, hence, the rigor of a study (Creswell, 1997). These measures are interwoven into every step of the inquiry to create a cohesive investigation (Creswell, 1997; Kvale, 1989) by identifying and correcting errors before they become a part of the data collection or analysis. Face validity involves a subjective assessment of an instrument

measures that which it is intended to do (Cozby, 2001). Content validity is the degree to which a measure addresses the concept of interest (Moskal & Leydens, 2000). To assuage subversion of the study's findings, a group was convened to provide peer debriefing about the study, emergent themes, and suggested findings.

Peer debriefing is the process of sharing information with unaffiliated peers in a manner that simulates the process of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mikuska, 2017). The purpose is to expose and rectify aspects of the inquiry that may not align with the mentioned constructs of validity (Patton, 2002). Moreover, the researcher has an opportunity to redress assumed biases and assumptions, and peers can offer initial feedback regarding the validity of the instrument (Hilton, 2017; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Three African American male school administrators served as a debriefing committee and offer feedback about the proposed findings. These educators provided affirmations of the data via their own experiences and offered no suggestions for redaction.

The Researcher's Role

I am an African American gentleman who was reared as the last of 14 children in a southeastern town. Neither of my parents received formal schooling, but they relentlessly insisted on the invaluable worth of a superior education. As a high school student, I initially took an interest in mathematics and planned to pursue a career as an actuary. My Spanish instructor caused me to become enamored with the idea of cultures, languages, and exploring the world. I studied Spanish at a large university, and from that moment I was the only or one of few African American men in this professional space. I have taught Spanish and English as a second language to diverse groups of students. My tenure as a school administrator has comprised inner-city and suburban appointments.

I am currently a curricular supervisor of world languages, a central office position that has oversight of 90-95 instructors. Caucasian females comprise 90% of these instructors. I was the first non-Caucasian person to be hired in the Division of Curriculum and Instruction and remain as such 11 years after my appointment. In this role, I have participated in many efforts to recruit African Americans at collegiate fairs to work in my system. These endeavors, like those of the school district in general, have been largely ineffective. The system's geographic location, competitive salaries in other counties, and other factors may account for the low number of educators of color. Hence, I have a vested interest in attracting more Black male teachers into the profession. It is hoped that the recommendations contained herein will contribute to the same.

I will conduct semi-structured interviews, posing open-ended questions to participants in the same district where I work. Although I know who the teachers are, I have had limited to no professional or personal experience with the respondents. Neither of the instructors is a teacher of world languages. My personal stake is to assist in establishing efforts to diversify the teaching workforce and to depict a professional image of African American men for the students in William & Mary Public Schools. As the study is qualitative, the researcher will serve as a human instrument (i.e., as opposed to the qualitative calibration of an instrument) of investigation. Accompanying this process will be the potential limitations of personal bias, limitations, and connection to the participants' responses (Brown, 2006; Sherif, 2018). To assuage these concerns, the audit trails, capturing written notes, and ensuring accurate reporting of the respondents' narratives will aid in presenting the objective and unbiased findings of this study.

Data Collection

A qualitative phenomenological study should minimally employ face-to-face, virtual, or phone interviews, a time during which the researcher strives to describe and co-construct

meanings of fundamental themes in the lives of the participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This process will help the researcher access the feelings of respondents, thereby facilitating more comprehension of the experiences of Black male teachers (Sutton, 2015). To accomplish said objectives, the inquiry utilized semi-structured interviews, artifacts (provided by the participants at their discretion) that speak to the lived experiences of these educators, and a focus group interview with select participants. The use of multiple sources adheres to triangulation, a means of ensuring that the resulting account is robust and sufficiently representative of the participants' experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1999).

Interviews

Phenomenology can serve to provide invaluable information about various features of the lived and professional experiences as discerned by individuals of a social entity (Garfinkel, 1967). One means of acquiring such details is by conversing with participants in an informal, semi-structured, or structured setting (Giorgi, 1985). A set of 12 questions was posed to teachers in a semi-structured approach. In other words, the researcher and the participants used the initial inquiries as beginning points of dialogue for which both parties were able to expand. To ensure the teachers were comfortable in responding to the questions, the researcher met the participants in their natural (e.g., classrooms) or desired settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). All interviews took place during the instructors' planning periods or after school. Recording, with the teachers' consent, took place via Google Meet. The transcription and verification of narratives occurred at a second, agreed-upon time in a virtual setting. The alignment of interview questions to research inquiries is herein provided.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Share your thoughts regarding the current state of Black males in teaching.

2. Who figured into your decision to become a teacher?

3. What other factors influenced your decision to become an educator?

4. How do the district's practices (i.e., de facto way of doing business) in general influence your role as an African American educator?

5. How do the district's procedures (e.g., duties, course assignments) influence your role as an African American educator?

6. How might these practices and procedures be perpetuated or altered to impact your professional experiences as a Black male teacher?

7. How do your colleagues perceive your role as an African American male teacher?

8. How do parents and other stakeholders perceive your role as a Black male teacher?

9. How do you define a lived or professional experience that is attributable to your race and gender?

10. How do you distinguish between professional experiences that may apply to anyone versus that you perceived as rooted in race and gender?

11. Talk to me about any other professional encounters that you attribute to being a Black male.

12. What else regarding the state of African American men in teaching would you like to share?

Questions one through three related to issues of social justice with which some African American men grapple in deciding to pursue an educational career (Gist, 2017; Young & Young, 2020). Pabon (2017) found that some teachers of color elect the profession as a means to contravene the educational inequities within the Black race instead of choosing more lucrative careers. These questions sought to address considerations for current practice and policy in the

K-12 sector. These inquiries also aimed to explore contending reasons educated Black men opt

not to teach (Bell, 2017; Goings & Bianco, 2016; Graham & Erwin, 2011; Sleeter, 2016) and

whether current initiatives to recruit males of color (Clemson University, 2019; South Carolina

State University, 2019) are sufficiently accomplishing their objectives. These three questions

may serve to inform recommendations to school districts and universities regarding these two

concepts.

Questions four, five, and six related to the deliberate and subtle practices, policies, and

procedures of school districts that may have an influence on the ways in which Black male

teachers grapple with and make meaning of their professional encounters. Thomas (2020), for

example, found that school districts still wrestle with hiring more teachers of color, often

masking their efforts for diversity in recruiting instructors who identify as minorities in general.

Moreover, some school systems that have limited success in diversifying their workforce face

other challenges in maintaining said staff as they often leave the profession at three times the rate

of their counterparts (Grillo & Barreau, 2020). D'Amico et al. (2017) suggested that a myriad of

issues such as lack of support for certification, workload, professional development, and other

factors adversely impact the professional experiences of teachers of color.

Questions seven through 10 pertained to the practical, day-to-day roles Black male teachers

perceive as their primary responsibilities to include their interactions with colleagues and

members of the community (Bristol, 2020; Milner, 2016). Baldridge (2017) found that men of

color are often assigned to work in impoverished, low-performing schools where minority

students are deemed to be broken, and thus, these teachers are positioned as saviors and

surrogate parents for these learners. Bristol and Mentor (2018) put forth that in placing BMTs in

underachieving settings, these educators become de facto disciplinarians whose jobs indirectly

contribute to a school-to-prison pipeline. It was, therefore, critical to ask respondents to ponder whether the notion of this dual responsibility (Sandles, 2018) was a lived experience and contributed to how they make meaning of their lived experiences.

Questions 11 - 13 asked the participants to consider the vast array of encounters they face as educators and to which of those they assigned racial and gendered significance. Gist (2018) found that Black male teachers experienced challenges in finding professional environments that valued their professional expertise (i.e., instructional delivery and other associated tasks) (Bristol & Goings, 2019). Griffin and Tackie (2017) reported that teachers of color tend to serve as instructors, role models, advocates, and in a myriad of other ways, largely due to social convictions that seek to redress the educational inequities of their ancestors. Reflecting on these inquiries, however, is important to distinguish between encounters that may be typical of the profession versus those that are unique to their status as Black men.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a method of qualitative inquiry that involves the examination of papers, records, journals, or other artifacts to give meaning to a studied phenomenon (Bowen, 2009). Said review can contribute meaningful data as part of categorical themes in phenomenological studies similar to interviews and observations (Bowen, 2009). O'Leary (2014) states there are three types of documents: public records, personal documents, and physical evidence. The current study will focus on the latter as a source of data regarding the lived and professional experiences of Black male teachers.

The participants in the study received correspondence (see Appendix B) that provided examples of acceptable documents and the purpose of collecting the same. Any records the teachers believed spoke to their professional experience, specifically to augment, expand, or

negate previously shared responses in the semi-structured interviews were solicited for analysis. Individuals were asked to redact all personally identifiable information, and share it digitally with the researcher for examination. The investigator and the participants conversed via phone or electronically to ensure the accuracy of data and meanings associated with these items.

Based on the documents provided, the participants' perceptions and assigned meanings contributed to multiple research questions. Correspondence from an administrator that directed a teacher to assume more responsibilities in addressing behavioral issues could have affirmed experiences mentioned in Research Question 2. Other documentation from parents or community members may have suggested reasons participants believe educated African American males opted not to enter the teaching profession as mentioned in Research Question 1.

Focus Group

To expound upon the responses of participants in the semi-structured interviews and comments about their artifacts, all participants (i.e., contingent upon patterns or themes of initial responses in the semi-structured interviews) were invited to participate in a focus study. These individuals were categorized as one group and asked to augment their discussion based on their similarities or contradictions of responses (e.g., differences among rural and affluent schools, similarities among seasoned and veteran administrators). The goal was to learn more about the commonalities (or lack thereof), affirm, and expand upon the teachers' initial responses (Patton, 2015). Moreover, this measure was appropriate as respondents were more inclined to share details of their lived experiences in a group setting as opposed to individual discussions (Doria et al., 2018). These questions were minimally revised as a result of participants' responses and feedback during the semi-structured interviews and analysis of documents.

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions

The inquiries for this discussion varied only in terms of asking (i.e., follow-up questions) for additional detail, examples, or more concrete detail.

1. What similarities or differences do you notice in reasons persons shared for becoming an educator?

2. What commonalities were there in the factors and human figures persons expressed as motivations for becoming educators?

3. What racial and gendered considerations were among the reasons your mentors suggested for your entering the teaching profession?

4. Talk to me about your shared thoughts and intersections regarding how the school system's practices influence your making meaning of lived and professional experiences as Black male educators.

5. How are these practices similar or different to other school systems in which you completed student teaching or worked as a full-time employee?

6. How similar or different are your experiences with systemic procedures in this school system?

7. How do these procedures differ according to level (i.e., elementary, middle, or high) or the student demographics of your schools?

8. Talk to me about the similarities and differences of interactions with your colleagues in your respective schools.

9. How do your interactions with colleagues align/differ from those with other stakeholders?

10. Upon hearing how other participants defined lived and professional experiences rooted in race and gender, how do their statements align with or contradict your original response?

11. How do you distinguish between encounters that are racially and gendered rooted as opposed to generic, professional interactions that may be attributable to other factors (e.g., an administrator's personality)?

Questions one, two, and three related to the contributing factors (i.e., introductory questions and warm-up) African American men in choosing to become educators. Scott and Alexander (2019) posed, for instance, that universities and school systems may attract more males of color in recruiting professionals from other fields, offering tuition assistance, or loan forgiveness for teaching in areas of critical shortages. Questions four through six offered insights about how participants' responses regarding systemic procedures impacted the lived experiences of Black male educators. Sleeter (2017) suggested in her exploration of BMTs' awareness of culturally responsive pedagogy, many men of color in the classroom are situated as agents of bridging the achievement gaps of minorities. Moreover, their professional roles must also serve to counter the endemic remnants of race and racism that have adversely affected the education of many students of color. Questions seven through 10 spoke to how these educators made meaning of their interactions with colleagues they perceived as rooted in their African American race and as a male educator (Bell, 1970; Kanter, 1977).

The researcher and participants convened in a virtual format to discuss the questions of the focus study. In addition to sharing their responses to the aforementioned inquiries, participants had the opportunity to expound upon the similarities and differences of their experiences as Black male teachers. Prior to concluding the discussion, the investigator ensured

that all information had been accurately transcribed and sufficiently captured the intended meanings of the teachers. This source was the third and final in the eventual efforts to triangulate the data related to the current study.

Data Analysis

Although phenomenology is a collection of methods that encompasses a philosophical movement and an array of approaches to research, Finlay (2009) stated that this field is the study of the nature and significance of phenomena. The hermeneutic branch of this research seeks to ascribe interpretation of such events (Finlay, 2009), co-constructed by the researcher and the participants in the current study. Van Manen (1997) posited that there are at least four steps in analyzing data in hermeneutic phenomenology: capturing themes, discovering thematic aspects, isolating thematic aspects, and developing linguistic transformations. Respectively, these processes refer to suspending bias to engage in conversation to make sense of communicated experiences, vicariously undergoing related encounters (e.g., reliving sensory details with the respondents) to arrive at a deeper understanding of the same, distinguishing between incidental and essential topics, and transcribing otherwise ineffable data into words that aptly capture the respondents' experiences. In light of these considerations, this section provides methods for analyzing the collected data.

I initially underwent a process of self-reflection in writing my perceptions and biases as visual reminders to eliminate such considerations from the analysis (i.e., bracketing) (Colazzi, 1978). Some of these factors include my race, gender, and specific encounters that I associated with race and tokenism throughout my career. Determining clusters of meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018), the process of highlighting meaningful statements, quotes, and phrases, was applied to the semi-structured interviews, the first source of data, to capture the essence of incidental and

essential themes via free imaginative variation (van Manen, 1997). This process was to determine incidental versus essential themes via the mental experiment of using polarities to see if the related information would otherwise be accurate in different scenarios (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; van Manen, 1997).

Participants and the researcher reviewed the data collected after each conversation to ascertain the accuracy of transcribed notes and corroborate the preliminary findings to co-construct meaning (Colazzi, 1978). The ensuing information from the semi-structured interviews was used to develop recurring themes, clusters of meaning, and thematic aspects (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 1997). These clusters of data were then analyzed holistically (phrases that capture overall meaning), by highlighting (occurrence of essential phrases), and via details (individual words and quotes) to arrive at the thematic aspects (van Manen, 1997). The hermeneutic process of transcribing this information was the final step in developing linguistic transformations, written ascriptions of meanings to the participants' encounters (van Manen, 1997). An affirmation or rebuttal of the two theoretical frameworks is reported in the findings (Elliott, 2018).

The process of self-reflection and assigning clusters of meanings was repeated for the analysis of documents. The participants participated in dialectical deliberations without a prescribed methodology to collaborate on assigned meanings of their lived and professional experiences as evident in the sources of data (Koch, 1995; van Manen, 1997). In vivo coding (Elliott, 2018) was conducted for each piece of data wherein a label or category was assigned to a word or short phrase that represents information from the data. The resulting patterns, differences, and similarities of these themes were captured to distinguish between incidental and essential themes (van Manen, 1997). This inductive coding was used to determine if the

information aligned with the tenets of the two philosophical notions for discussion in the subsequent chapters.

The focus group served to gain deeper insights and understandings of the educators' lived and professional experiences (van Manen, 1997). In a virtual platform, the structure allowed for one participant to share his perspectives on a theme, and others to express how this statement resonated or contradicted their views (van Manen, 1997). The BMTs were apprised of and utilized van Manen's (1997) four tenets of existentialism as guiding principles for their comments and feedback. In other words, each reply was categorized regarding how events were experienced regarding lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), or lived human relation (communality) (van Manen, 1997). This process continued, with follow-up questions and comments as needed, until respondents communicated they had sufficiently addressed their concerns (van Manen, 1997). The concluding phase was to ascertain the accuracy of thematic aspects before transcribing this data into linguistic transformations (van Manen, 1997).

Triangulation of data pertains to the use of several sources of data to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of a given phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After implementing, reviewing, assigning meaning, and verifying narratives of the three sources, the researcher again labeled categories of meaning based on recurrent or divergent themes (Elliott, 2018; van Manen, 1997). This use of multiple sources (i.e., interviews, documents, and focus group) allows for the verification of what participants say in an interview, for example, against what may be read in a provided document (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Natow, 2020). The eventual objective was to ensure that the findings have reduced as many biases and inaccuracies as feasibly possible (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Chapter 4 will offer

additional insights into the groupings of leitmotifs as analyzed from the mentioned origins of information.

Trustworthiness

The hallmarks by which academicians determine the merit of qualitative research rest upon the four categories of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These characteristics are subsequently defined with scholarly citations and proposed measures to achieve each in the current study.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree of confidence that the study represents veritable findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, the findings embody credible details that accurately capture interpretations of the participants' views (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Participants and the researcher will convene to co-construct meaning, themes, and categories after reviewing each source of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The collaboration with the teachers in the triangulation before reporting said results will help to ensure the veracity of their narratives (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability refers to the permanency of the data's findings over an extended period of time, an audit trail that is realized by the consistent implementation of the research strategies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I will achieve this goal by asking all participants the same questions, adhering to the same procedures for transcribing replies, and ensuring that all persons have the opportunity to verify the content of what has been captured from their conversations. Confirmability pertains to ensuring that data and interpretations are not fabricated by the researcher, but the gathered information is clearly derived from the participants (Korstjens &

Moser, 2018). I will also achieve this criterion by allowing participants to co-construct meaning after their interviews and providing the opportunity to validate findings before publishing them as part of this study.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent that the findings of a study may be applicable to other settings with similar participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I will seek to achieve this criterion by rich, descriptive comparisons with other researchers who have examined the lived experiences of African American male educators. I will also highlight where my findings affirm and depart from others in extant, empirical data. In the case of significant deviation from other findings, I will indicate such, recommending additional research to generalize the results of this study.

Ethical Considerations

I complied with the requirements of securing IRB approvals from Liberty University and William and Mary Public Schools before communicating with anyone regarding the pilot study or the actual research. All teachers signed a document of informed consent that explained the purpose, benefits, risks, and other relevant details associated with the study before participating. All instructors had an opportunity to articulate questions or concerns regarding the study. Answers were secured from one of the mentioned organizations if I were unable to provide the same. Individuals who may have elected to withdraw from participating in this study would have been able to do so without penalty or retribution. All personally identifiable information (i.e., participants, names of schools, stakeholders, and school districts) was assigned pseudonyms in the writing of this manuscript. All digital sources of data were password protected on computers.

Paper documents were securely stored in a locked cabinet. In accordance with the guidelines of Liberty University, this information will be destroyed after three years.

Summary

The current study endeavored to analyze the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators in a suburban school system. Three sources of data—semi-structured interviews, analysis of instructor-provided artifacts, and a focus group—served as information to triangulate regarding perspectives and encounters as Black male teachers in a suburban school district. The Division of Human Resources provided the names of educators who identified as the specified gender and ethnicity. No other prerequisites were established as mandatory for involvement in this study. The sampling was purposeful to address abiding concerns that exclusively affect this group of educators.

A pilot study took place with three African American male educators who have earned doctoral degrees in education and are currently administrators. Their feedback regarding the questions for the interview and other sources of data were implemented before conducting the study. Triangulation of data, audit trails, and ethical considerations were consistently addressed in applying the same strategies of inquiry with all participants. Data analysis of the three mentioned sources took place in accordance with the recommendations and suggestions of van Manen's (1997) guidance for hermeneutic phenomenology. All teachers had an opportunity to co-construct and verify the accuracy of data prior to its publication in the study. Chapter 4 will provide additional information regarding the findings of the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

African American male educators comprise fewer than 2% of the more than 3.2 million

teachers in the public schools of this nation (Riser-Kositsky, 2020; U.S. Department of

Education, 2016). Geiger (2018) reported that slightly more than half of all elementary and

secondary students now identify as an ethnic group other than Caucasian (U. S. Department of

Education, 2016). The influx of these racial minorities is projected to continue increasing

between now and 2026 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Hence, the lack of parity

between these students and their instructors is likely to become more pronounced as well.

Black male teachers are underrepresented in all areas of public schooling, and districts

have begun to look creatively at ways to attract more of this population (Singh, 2018). Some

research has advanced the notion that educated males of color may opt for more lucrative

careers, thereby contributing to this shortage (Partelow et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2004). This

investigation sought to explore how said educators ascribe significance to their vocational

encounters as contributions to the extant research and implications for future recruitment.

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological investigation was to explore and

assign significance to the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators

as functions of the practices (i.e., systemic procedures and interactions with colleagues) of a

suburban school system. School systems' practices were generally defined as procedures (e.g.,

extracurricular duties, assigned courses) (Baldridge, 2017; Barshay, 2016; Bristol & Mentor,

2018) of a school district and interactions with stakeholders (e.g., colleagues, parents, students)

(Bristol, 2020; Bristol & Goings, 2019). More specifically, the study sought to discover how

these experiences shaped the participants' recommendations for strategies that should be

implemented by the school system that would influence how this group of educators makes meaning of the said encounters. The theories guiding this study were Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977) as they respectively relate to how race and symbolic status inform the lived and professional experiences of Black male instructors in a suburban school system.

This chapter provides a brief description of the setting where the investigation took place followed by a profile of the 12 participants. Results of the three sources of data (i.e., semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and a focus group) are presented according to the themes that emerged from each, highlighting commonalities, outliers, and points of disagreement. The study's central question endeavored to determine how systemic practices of a school system affect the ways in which Black male educators make meaning of their lived and professional experiences. Two related questions involved how the district's procedures and interactions correlate to these encounters, and a final inquiry focused on how these instructors have confronted the notions of race, racism, and tokenism.

Site

William and Mary Public Schools (WMPS) is a public school system in the state of Maryland. The district has some 45,000-50,000 employees and 69 schools. Twenty-four of these buildings serve secondary students, locations where all of the participants in this study are currently employed. Of approximately 3,000 certificated instructors, 22 of these persons identify as African American males. An invitation was electronically sent to the individuals whose names various colleagues provided, and 12 gentlemen agreed to participate in this investigation.

Participants

Participants in this study were persons who identified as African American males (See Table 1). All individuals work in a middle or high school in William and Mary Public Schools in a certificated capacity. All persons have an earned master's degree except two; one of these two individuals will have completed his graduate work in May 2021. Their years of teaching experience range from fewer than five years to more than 20. Only four of the respondents indicated origins or familial ties in the county that WMPS serves, and the other eight relocated there for various reasons. The following information is a brief depiction of each instructor. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants.

Table 1

Profile of Participants

Pseudonyms	Middle or High School	Gender	Ethnicity	Level of Education	Years of Experience
William	HS	M	African American	Bachelor's	20-25
John Frank	HS	M	African American	Master's	20-25
Carvin	HS	M	African American	Master's	0-5
Walter	MS	M	African American	Master's	25-30
James	HS	M	African American	Master's	25-30
Nile	MS	M	African American	Bachelor's	5-10
Kendrick	MS	M	African American	Bachelor's	5-10
Justin	HS	M	African American	Master's	10-15
Nicholas	HS	M	African American	Master's	10-15
Michael	HS	M	African American	Master's	5-10
Bobby	HS	M	African American	Bachelor's	0-5
Christian	MS	M	African American	Master's	10-15

William

William is a sexagenarian who has more than twenty years of experience in the classroom. His impetus for entering the profession was a combination of persons in the

community and the inability to pursue an alternative career path. Although his upbringing was during a time of racial turbulence, this era served as William's motivation to hone and master his instructional content. An unequivocal expertise in his field coupled with a gregarious personality, he asserts, penetrate the boundaries of almost any social circle. This trait also reportedly has contributed to his popularity among all types of students, their parents, and his longevity in the school system. William cautioned that his ability to relate effortlessly to various demographics does not equate to his denial of the racist society in which we live or the level of scrutiny to which he is always subjected as an African American male instructor.

John Frank

John Frank is another sexagenarian who has some 20-25 years of teaching experience. He transferred to William and Mary Public Schools after working at other locations in a neighboring state. As an avid scholar of history, this teacher interweaves such content into his discipline as a way of reaching all groups of students. In challenging his classes to verbalize their thinking, for example, on racially insensitive writings or comments (e.g., confederate memorabilia), he has successfully gained the respect of persons who might otherwise display racial hostility. John Frank also expressed that he shares personal stories about his academic accomplishments and military career, reported efforts in proactively minimizing concerns about his phenotype and token status as a man of color. He overwhelmingly credits his ability to engage in open dialogue with all students, parents, and administrators as the contributing factor to his success in the school system.

Carvin

Carvin is an African American male teacher of five to ten years. Prior to joining William and Mary Public Schools, he worked for other state agencies in capacities similar to his

instructional discipline. He reported happening upon the teaching profession as a result of some casual dialogue and associations with faculty members as a student in high school. Carvin expressed that he was not an adept scholar, and nor was he a disciplinary issue on the other end of the continuum. This inability of the schools, he stated, to determine a path for students who had no clear path or passion, became his motivation to help similar students. As a younger staff member of color, Carvin expressed that staff members and parents often talk to him as though he were their son. He also shared the de facto responsibility of being designated as the resident expert on cultural issues (i.e., about any race other than Caucasian) when such topics come upon in faculty meetings. Carvin was most proud of the fact that he sees himself as a professional breath of fresh air for African American parents. They often seek his counsel on a myriad of topics. This relationship is one that he endeavors to establish with all communities that his school serves.

Walter

Walter is a transplant to the county that serves William and Mary Public Schools. He has some 25 years of experience in the district. Despite his lengthy tenure in the system, he expressed great surprise at the number (albeit small) of Black male teachers who participated in the focus group as he did not know many of them. Hence, his greatest recommendation to improve the way these educators make meaning of their experiences would be to form an entity wherein persons could support each other and collaborate. He credits a high school classmate with special needs as his deciding factor to pursue a teaching career. As there were educators in his family, the conversation was not a foreign concept. Walter believes the Covid pandemic has shown the importance of Black teachers and possibly highlighted disparities in resources among various demographics. Thus, male teachers of color are more important now than ever. These

instructors, he continued, are integral to helping minority students overcome learning loss and teaching them life lessons for survival. Walter believes systems need to look seriously at deliberate efforts to attract individuals who look like their students.

James

James enjoyed a lucrative career with two prominent agencies of the federal government. These positions required him to travel extensively, and he soon realized that he was spending less and less time with the family, especially his two sons. His wife encouraged him to consider some alternate professions, a conversation that led him to recall the profound impact many of his teachers had on his upbringing. Taking a significant decrease in salary, James began working as an instructional assistant, gradually enrolling in courses, and taking the necessary assessments to become a certified instructor. He perceives his teaching role to encompass many responsibilities and a de facto representative for African American students. Teachers, parents, and staff members, James said, assume that he has the solution to remedy all problems that involve minority students. He expressed that many stakeholders respond affirmatively to him because of his voice and size. James remains emphatic that relationships, not his height or skin color, are foremost in working with young persons. His biggest recommendation for all school systems is that employees undergo professional development to work better with individuals of various cultures.

Nile

Nile is a secondary instructor of five to ten years. As a student, his relatives frequently encouraged him to go into the teaching profession as many of the family's friends were educators. His undergraduate studies, however, consisted of the sciences in preparation for medical school. He reported that an internship at a high school with African American and

Hispanic students provided a much-needed epiphany. These young men, he reported, represented the spectrum of negative data points, and they otherwise would have likely dropped out of school. Nile shared the success he experienced with these individuals made clear that his talents were needed to change a trajectory of hopelessness for the next generation. He believes that systems should do more to recruit teachers of color, but a current problem exists with the instructional materials from publishers. Nile suggested minority children will see the teaching profession as a viable career when more textbook images represent people who look like them. He looks forward to working with colleagues and stakeholders to make this recommendation a reality.

Kendrick

Kendrick is a millennial graduate of a school system wherein he was one of very few students of color. His parents, while supportive of teachers, continue to encourage that he pursue more lucrative opportunities in other fields. He remains adamant that his work in middle school is a calling and needed for many reasons. Kendrick emphatically professed his Christian beliefs, citing Jesus Christ as the most exemplary teacher. For this reason, he believes that sharing his love of math and science with young people comes closest to emulating this same Biblical principle. His outlook on issues on race and tokenism involving Black male educators was most objective. Kendrick posits that male instructors of color should embrace racist encounters as opportunities for courageous conversations. Many people, he continued, have no idea that their actions and statements can be construed as offensive. He also compared being an instructor to the analogy of a fishbowl. Kendrick cited that everyone holds educators to a high degree of scrutiny, and this situation is even more pronounced for African American men. Hence, he said, they

should utilize this platform to contravene every negative image that is portrayed in the media and other sources.

Justin

Justin's career with the school system began as a paraprofessional, a pool of employees to which he points would be ideal to begin recruiting more teachers of color. Many of these persons, he asserts, are indigenous to the area and need mentors to support them through the process of undergraduate studies. While working as an instructional assistant, Justin had a conversation with his former high school principal. Her firm counsel, he stated, was the recurring message he heard in the next few years as he completed his degree. Justin stated his calling to the classroom was divinely appointed as all students, not just those of color, benefit from seeing a professional African American male as the media is replete with negative stereotypes. His teaching of the social sciences affords him opportunities to discuss global issues, thereby breaking down barriers and establishing a more tolerant and informed society.

Nicholas

Nicholas' childhood dream was to play professional baseball. He fondly recalled the comfort and security of his two-parent household, headed by persons whom he labeled as his greatest role models to date. His parents, unlike many other African American relatives he surmised, insisted he become a teacher. Nicholas has been teaching for some 10-15 years and believes the vocation is ideal for fathers who desire to spend quality time with their families. Like several other instructors, he expressed a desire to meet more frequently with other Black male colleagues so as not to feel isolated and share ideas of how best to reach students. Nicholas applauded the district's recent efforts of the digital program for cultural awareness and requiring all K-12 classrooms to facilitate lessons of African American history in February. He also

expressed that Black men would likely make more positive meanings of their experiences if there were more men of color with whom they could collaborate and feel supported.

Michael

When asked about the state of Black men in the school system, Michael responded that it is a travesty that so many are either instructional assistants or custodians. He went on to share that he, too, began his career as a paraprofessional, but his awakening logic was that he should earn more and have a greater impact on students' lives. Michael indicated that his rapport with young persons is such that he hears a range of sad, personal, and celebratory accounts. He cited his race and gender as reasons persons readily seek his counsel on a myriad of topics. Given that he is a rarity in his building, Michael believes he has an obligation to children of color and to be a positive role model for all students. He recommended utilizing Black males as ambassadors for recruiting others in the field because " … people must see us doing it to be interested in what we do."

Bobby

Bobby is another instructor who originally wanted to pursue a career in the medical field. He contemplated working in an environment that was more heavily African American, believing that students would receive and relate better to his instructional delivery. Family considerations caused him to apply for a position in William and Mary Public Schools. A counselor during his undergraduate years of college frequently said to Bobby that he was missing his calling by not going into teaching. This person was also instrumental in facilitating sessions for male students of color. This same approach, he stated, would be invaluable in recruiting other persons into the profession. Bobby mentioned that said collaboration would serve as the ideal means for advertising and attracting other men into the classroom. He was also quite complimentary of the

persons in his department, mostly Caucasians, who have been tremendously helpful in getting him acclimated to lesson planning and differentiating his content for various types of learners.

Christian

Having taught math and science for 10-15 years in different states, Christian expressed that stakeholders have incessantly sought to make him feel inferior. Parents have questioned minute details of his grading procedures. Teachers have relegated him to teaching lower-level classes while implying that he was not sufficiently prepared to teach more rigorous courses. He has attributed these conversations to being a Black man and a token representative in his former schools. Still, his primary objective is to make this content exciting and comprehensible for students of color. Christian stated that minorities are underrepresented in these fields (e.g., science, technology, engineering, mathematics) because many do not see themselves in their daily lessons. Using pragmatical, everyday comparisons to students' lives, Christian endeavors to help young people do what his teachers did for him—defy the odds of their upbringing and become successful. He reported that stakeholders in William and Mary Public Schools have been generally courteous and willing to share resources. Christian, however, does note the conspicuous lack of opportunities for educators of color to convene and support each other. This recommendation would be his foremost concern in helping to make more positive meanings of his lived and professional experiences in the school district.

Results

This section provides information about the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, an examination of teacher-provided documents, and a focus group. Additionally, details regarding the methods of such analysis, development of codes, and then how those codes shaped themes are also included. Following said information, there is a discussion of how these

motifs provided responses to the central research and related questions of this study. Specific examples, to include quotes from participants, are provided to offer a more concrete understanding of how these African American male educators ascribe significance to their lived and professional experiences.

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, a pilot study was conducted with three African American male administrators who have terminal degrees in education. The purposes for doing so were to simulate the three subsequent means of information to be obtained from the study's respondents and to elicit feedback regarding the nature of the questions. These colleagues offered reminders to articulate questions in a manner that would not predispose teachers to reply in a negative or positive manner. No edits were made to the syntax or grammar of the inquiries. I then made an extensive list of personal biases and encounters experienced throughout my professional career as related to perceived issues of race and gender. This bracketing (Colazzi, 1978) of predilections served as a visual reminder to remain objective in conducting each phase of the data collection.

Three sources of data were obtained for triangulation of responses—semi-structured interviews of brief introductions and 12 questions, eight inquiries regarding a teacher-provided document, and a focus group with 10 instructors. Interviews took place virtually via Google Meet, a video-communication application that is used by teachers in WMPS for daily instruction. Having received the consent forms and approval from participants to record our conversations, this feature allowed for accurate transcription of the same. The artifacts for document analysis were electronic or handwritten correspondence received from an administrator or parent. Participants responded to questions presented, focusing on how they processed the information upon reading it, why they felt the verbiage spoke to their race and gender, and how the text might

have been interpreted differently by a person of another ethnicity. The transcription of these statements were also verified by the respondents. After reading the teachers' responses multiple times, words and phrases again were utilized as codes that are explained in the subsequent section. These replies mirrored many of the sentiments expressed in the individual interviews and focus group. Included quotes from the instructors represent statements from the three mentioned sources of data. The gentlemen overwhelmingly shared similar ways they have made meaning of their lived and professional experiences; hence, all persons were invited to participate in the focus group, and 10 of the 12 agreed to do so. Additional questions of clarification and probing were posed throughout the three mentioned sources of data to ensure the researcher's understanding.

The individual interviews took place during instructors' planning periods. Given that I had only met two of the participants, our conversations were quite lengthy (i.e., between 45 and 90 minutes) as we sought to unpack our stories about being educators of color. All persons provided an e-mail or other electronic correspondence as the document for analysis. Within a day or two after our meetings, the teachers verified the transcription of their responses (i.e., for the interview and document analysis) by means of e-mail affirmation. The focus group presented an opportunity for persons to meet colleagues who have worked in WMPS for many years. More than half of the instructors expressed that they did not know the other gentlemen although there were only 10. After this conversation of some 70 minutes, everyone agreed to verify the transcription of their statements within two days.

Theme Development

After printing the participants' responses from the three sources of data, I read all the transcriptions again to ensure a solid comprehension of the same. I began the process of looking

for clusters of meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018) by highlighting recurring statements, phrases, and quotes. The initial phase was to assign some of the instructors' words (i.e., in vivo coding) to said reading as an initial summary of the collected information (Elliott, 2018). When asked what the school district might implement, for example, to change how they ascribe meaning to their experiences, several persons utilized the word "target." They mentioned how the system needs not only to recruit, but to engage in deliberate efforts aimed at attracting Black men into the classroom. This undertaking led to determining which themes were essential to the study as well as those that were incidental (See Appendix H).

As another layer of verifying the emerging themes, the data was then disassembled according to the natural and verbatim codes of the teachers (Castleberry & Nolan, 2018). This technique assisted in looking at various groupings and possible combinations. Every effort was made to ensure that these designations represented comprehensive thoughts and ideas (e.g., interactions with stakeholders) as opposed to singular occurrences (e.g., one incident with a parent). For example, when teachers talked about Black male teachers who made an impact in their lives and their subsequent desire to do the same for younger generations, these comments were grouped under the heading of role model. Other instructors spoke about the need to be deliberate in recruiting not just minorities, but African American men, and how current males of color should be utilized to address this void. Again, similar comments all were categorized under the heading of recruitment. This process continued until all emerging themes (i.e., from the respondents' answers) had been exhausted.

These resulting categories of significance were (1) scarcity (2) role model (3) recruitment (4) support and collaboration (5) academic savior (6) parental surrogacy (7) cultural (mis)understandings (8) microaggressions (9) race and racism and (10) tokenism. A subsequent

reading of the results, highlighting details and looking holistically at the same, revealed how the participants' replies were parallel to the inquiries that this study sought to answer. Groupings one through five align generally to the central research question, six and seven pertain to sub-question one, eight and nine speak to sub-question two, and the last two classifications address tenets of the philosophical frameworks guiding this study. This information will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent findings.

Scarcity

The first leitmotif, consistently appearing in the responses of all participants, pertained to the notion of scarcity. The instructors emphatically expressed that men of color are so sparse in the classroom that all school systems, not just WMPS, should be alarmed at the absence of more concentrated efforts to recruit this group of educators. Michael compared these teachers to the United States Marines, saying that they are "… the few and the proud." William recalled that as a child that there "… were not a lot of people to look up to other than teachers, and very few of them were Black men. It is probably hard to be who you never see." Nicholas conveyed that his being a member of such "… a small fraternity …" hopefully provides job security in that he is "… never relegated to one place …" and has the ability to go many other places where there is a need.

Nile expressed that he was baffled by the lack of endeavors to combat this scarcity since African American men have "… a different way of teaching that seems to breathe fresh air into the minds of many youngsters because they rarely see a man teaching, let alone an articulate Black man." Bobby concurred with the idea that all students benefit from his presence for several reasons. Minorities, he believes, have a person with whom they can readily identify and emulate. Other races have an opportunity to dispel stereotypical images that have been perpetuated by the

media. Finally, Bobby and James commented they initially thought that only Black children would relate to them due to their phenotype. However, they quickly learned their race, gender, and manner of building relationships with young people have been welcomed by students of various ethnicities and have been beneficial in their working with the young persons they serve.

John Frank offered an alternative view on the deficit of Black male teachers, asserting that "Black men prefer more lucrative professions." Justin, however, disagreed with this claim. He expressed that there may be a "… de facto push and more value of our boys as musicians and athletes …", thereby depriving the teaching workforce of more male teachers of color. Michael agreed that many young people chase dreams and careers (e.g., professional sports) that will yield immediate wealth. He went on to say that the African American men who do go into education often "… are instructional assistants or janitors." Speaking from his personal experience, Carvin suggested that school systems should do more to inform Black students about "… all of their opportunities, to include post-secondary options, and the possibility of teaching."

Role Model

This second theme became evident as participants discussed their reasons and motivations for becoming educators. Persons not only talked about their influences as students, but also their subsequent desire to be equally as inspirational to the next generation. Carvin mentioned that it was not until college that his professors "… began to take an interest …" in his potential. Realizing that this period was too late, he understood the K-12 sector was where he needed to work. Similarly, Christian reported that his primary goal remains to "… show more Black kids that they can do math …" when it is taught in a manner to which they can relate. Nile shared a poignant, yet powerful, account of working with young men at a challenged high

school. "These boys made me want to be a teacher. They were of different races and previously

walked to school with not-so-good guys. Some reached out for help. I just loved it."

Other persons spoke about the impact their educators had on their lives and to the degree

that they never considered any vocation. Michael recalled conversations with a principal who

reminded him that he was "… becoming complacent …" and "… not living up to the greatest

potential …" by working as a professional and not pursuing his teacher's certification. Justin also

verbalized his admiration for a WMPS principal who would see him in the grocery store and

gently ask "When are you going to pursue teaching?" Nicholas conveyed that his parents always

shared that "… teaching is most conducive to family values …", allowing him to be intimately

involved with his biological children and their school-based activities. Highlighting Jesus Christ

as the world's greatest teacher, Kendrick offered that he simply desires "… to make the universe

a better place …" through his classroom.

Recruitment and Collaboration

To look at more innovative ways of attracting African American men into WMPS was

the most salient recommendation from the participants. Moreover, the teachers insisted that

opportunities for collaboration would also yield more positive ways they would make meaning

of their lived and professional experiences. Walter related that he "… felt like the district

purposely looked for …" him because of his content area. He also wondered how "… students

and parents must feel when they walk into a building and see very few minorities." Since

Walter's coming to the school system, he added that "… there has been little time spent on

efforts to ensure that these same brothers are OK, that they are surviving." Bobby agreed with

this idea in saying "It would definitely be helpful just to share things about the classroom, sports,

politics, or wherever the conversation might go with people who look like you." He proposed a

voluntary and bimonthly gathering wherein teachers could provide emotional support to each other.

John Frank recounted a meeting with other new hires when he came to the district. "This little reunion was helpful, and it made me feel really welcomed and supported." Kendrick recommended that "… there should be more of us represented in the system's efforts to recruit because some people, Black or White, are not used to seeing persons of color in certain positions." Justin pointed out that WMPS should look internally at how it could diversify its teaching staff. "Most of our support staff are people of color, so we can start by working with them, helping them to understand their tuition reimbursement and encouraging them to work here since they already have a vested interest in our students and community."

Michael reflected on the school system's advertising in recruiting teachers. "You have to put Black males in the media, on the brochures, and in pamphlets that are specifically designed to attract the population you lack." Given his passion for sharing the benefits of Black male teachers with all students, Nile expressed that school systems, in general, should "… start with the images we give to children. Let's put more men of color in our textbooks, and I believe this simple trick will begin to put careers in education on the minds of our youngsters." Nicholas agreed with this approach and also shared that it should be coupled with the verbiage districts communicate. "Similar to welcome back meetings when we always talk about data, we should highlight positive things about our Black male teachers. People would feel supported and likely try to recruit other men into the profession as well."

Parental Surrogacy and Academic Savior

The two aspects of serving in loco parentis and ostensibly having a panacea for African American students appeared as prominent themes. James shared that his colleagues perceive his

intervention for such students to be "… an unofficial role. It's just de facto. Some teachers just assume if a kid acts out, you'll deal with it." He continued by saying that co-workers believe he is a "… whisperer or has some magic for students of color, but you have to build relationships." Bobby affirmed the importance of getting to know young people by offering that he learned in a different school system that children do not respond well to him just because he is a "… big, Black man, but because they feel a genuine sense of care and love."

Justin and Nile view these professional responsibilities as notions they readily embrace. The former shared that "I find it interesting because my content gives me the opportunity to talk with students and their parents about current events. This helps me to get closer to them, and I think they receive what I have to say because I am a man of color." Nile perceives this added obligation as something "… that feels good because I get to help the child. Caucasian teachers often talk to me about our children, and I love it because, again, I am helping them, their parents, and ultimately, the students learn how to navigate what they will likely face in the world."

William, however, shared that he has never felt designated as the sole caregiver of minority students. "I am usually the life of the party with all people, so I readily assume the responsibility of all children." He continued that his proactive approach continues to contribute to his success in the classroom and a great rapport with his community. John Frank also contributed a dissimilar perspective in discussing his roles as a school-based parent and disciplinarian. "I have never had a problem with my colleagues designating me to do special things for one group because I believe they know I am here for all children. We have much more in common than not. We should have a common interest in all the kids."

Cultural Nuances

Words, actions, and gestures of equivocal meanings were at the center of teachers'

comments who spoke about (the lack of) cultural understanding. Kendrick insisted that persons

of color must exhibit patience in interactions with people who may have had limited interactions

with other ethnicities. However, he stated that he is "… always wondering if there a subliminal

message of racism, if it is cultural, or just who the person is." Justin communicated that he

doubts that parents know he is African American during electronic correspondence. "When we

meet …", he continued, "… there is something noticeable about the body language, perhaps a

good thing." John Frank offered that he proactively seeks to deescalate situations that may arise

due to his race by "… sharing information about my background, the military, and education. I

think then parents see that we all want the same things for these students regardless of our color."

Nicholas pointed out that WMPS perhaps has "… years of a certain ideology …", and it

will require professionalism and time to break the cycle of thoughts, microaggressions, and other

behaviors that Black men may perceive as inappropriate. He accepts this challenge, he stated, as

he remains focused on the students and their success. Carvin shared that he is less tolerant when

"… parents have attempted to talk as though they are addressing their son." He also expressed

delight in speaking on cultural issues in faculty meetings, but cautioned that "… all teachers

should seek to understand the students they serve." Walter proposed that school districts in the

nation should have ongoing training to "… look at our past, acknowledge what happened, learn

about our ever-changing students, and do our best to move forward as one human race."

Race, Racism, and Tokenism

Two philosophical frameworks, Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Tokenism (Kanter,

1977), guided this investigation. CRT examines societal issues in terms of race and racism, and

the latter sought to examine the role of women in professions dominated by men. It was utilized for the current manuscript to look into the role of men in education. Together, these tenets explored how African American male educators make meaning of their experiences along the lines of their race and gender. This theme appeared frequently as the responses from participants also informed Sub-Question Three, addressed in the subsequent section.

William commented on a special rapport with Hispanic students who struggle with the English language. "They remind me of myself. They are different. They are trying their best, and sometimes people just don't get them. I am definitely going the extra mile to help them succeed." In reflecting on former aspirations to go into the medical field, Nile remarked, "Being a physician would have provided more monetary wealth, but I have to do what I'm doing for my people." Kendrick has questioned if his interactions with some colleagues and stakeholders are because they "… have been taught to interact this way with people of color. I try not to judge people, but it can be tricky." Nicholas affirmed that distinguishing between the lack of respect and racism is often a challenging reflection. "I guess it's just a feeling. I guess it's almost on a respect level. I think I know when people are talking to me about my job performance versus talking down to me as a Black man."

Other teachers spoke to the crucial importance of their role and actions as possibly the sole (i.e., token) Black professional man whom their students may encounter. James shared, "I was definitely the only African American male teacher at Applegate (pseudonym) School and felt like a token. Everything I said and did, I believed, was watched, maybe even recorded. It was important to send the right messages." Walter expressed that history has placed men of color in situations as emblematic representations, but their impact is arguably dissimilar. "We have had two men on the Supreme Court, but the textbooks tell a very different story about each one.

While we wait for more diversity training, the few of us that there are, Black men, we have to be as graceful and diplomatic as possible."

Research Question Responses

This investigation sought to examine how African American male educators in a school system make ascribe meaning to their lived and professional experiences. Participants' responses in a semi-structured interview, analysis of teacher-provided documents, and a focus group with the instructors provided responses to the central research and sub-questions.

Central Research Question

The inquiry posed in the central research question was "How do school systems' practices impact the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators?" Hermeneutic phenomenological research endeavors to attribute a common significance to encounters thought to have been shared by a group of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; McGrath et al., 2019; van Manen, 1997). Studies have posited that said instructors contend with choosing this profession versus a more lucrative field to address years of racial inequities (Pabon, 2017; Pabon & Basile, 2019), while other literature suggested men of color are compelled to embrace this work to counter their gender-biased encounters (Bell, 1970; Gist, 2017). In the three collected sources of data, all participants articulated various means in which they have evaluated, assigned meaning, and reflected on their encounters via the lenses of their race and gender.

The theme of scarcity informed a reply to this question as respondents indicated the system's practices, deliberate and perhaps unintentional, are corollaries to the lack of Black male teachers, and subsequently, how they perceive this phenomenon. Justin commented on the de facto push (i.e., of many school systems) of Black males into music and sports. "We send this

subliminal message, for example, in the way we celebrate our male athletes more than our scholars. Is the latter group getting the same push to college as the first?" Carvin reported feeling discouraged from the teaching profession and college in general when a staff member recommended he "… become a medical assistant …" since becoming a veterinarian would require many years of schooling. Stated sentiments, the teachers reported, have forced them to question the nature of their scarcity, leaving them to make meaning of experiences in uncertain ways.

The second theme of being a role model informed responses to the central research question by addressing compelling reasons participants felt the need to pursue and remain in the teaching profession. Kendrick expressed "… male teachers were my role models. I wanted to make a difference for children the way they did for me." Walter expressed that he had several men as teachers and perceived this circumstance as normal until he became an instructor. John Frank shared that his "… football coaches were the reason …" he got into teaching because they provided a great example for manhood in addition to his relatives. The participants expressed an obligation to contribute to the betterment of society in their roles as educators. Hence, they viewed their undertaking such roles as means to effectuate positive change, not just for African American students, but also to provide positive images of men of color to other races as well.

The third theme of recruitment and collaboration addressed the central inquiry by providing recommendations that the participants believe would ameliorate how they make meaning of their professional experiences. Michael endorsed the idea of recruiting more teachers of color so as not to feel alone and a support group because "… it would help Black men with all of the stuff going on in the world now as people are walking on eggshells." Nicholas concurred with this notion in saying "… if there were more of us, we could talk about things and likely feel

better about what we are experiencing, good and bad." Christian added to this concept, saying

that "… it just makes sense to have a place where Black men, like other people who have things

in common, would be able to bounce ideas off of each other so that we know that we are not in

this by ourselves."

Sub-Question One

Sub-question one asked, "How do the systemic procedures (e.g., assignment of courses

and duties) of a suburban school district influence the lived and professional experiences of

African American male educators?" The theme of academic savior and parental surrogacy spoke

to this subject as participants reflected on how policies and processes shape their interpretation of

related encounters. Nicholas observed that he sees "… bias in the way that people tend to send

all the Black kids …" to his class. Christian noted that he "… was to teach advanced courses, but

everything was changed to work with classes that had lots of lower-level students of color."

James also spoke to having an abundance of African American students on his rosters compared

to other instructors in the department. Justin expressed "I am frequently given merit classes, but I

appreciate working with our children." Whereas the mentioned interpretations may not

necessarily connote displeasure, the conscious evaluation of how students are placed in classes

contributes to the manners in which instructors perceive their roles, values, and those of their

students as well.

Sub-Question Two

Sub-question two asked, "How do systemic interactions with various stakeholders impact

the lived and professional experiences of African American male instructors?" The theme of

parental surrogacy and academic savior also shed light on this inquiry regarding how Black male

educators assign meaning to their de facto experiences with stakeholders. James responded that

he has "… an unofficial role. It's just de facto. Some teachers just assume if a kid acts out, you'll

deal with it." Carvin mentioned that due to inordinate expectations of his colleagues in dealing

with students of color, he has "… committed this year not to over-function and refrained from

having additional conversations with parents that are the responsibilities of other personnel."

Whereas some participants expressed dissatisfaction with this charge, William remarked that he

enjoys taking on additional aspects of working with students of all ethnicities. All participants

agreed that this facet of their employment impacts the positive, negative, or neutral ways in

which they view their professional encounters.

The theme of cultural nuances was also prevalent in addressing how this element affects

the method in which these instructors ascribe significance to their experiences. Kendrick

communicated that his apprehensions in dealing with parents and stakeholders, wondering "… if

they are not accustomed to dealing with us …" and having to deescalate the environment before

talking about students' academic goals. William and John Frank shared they employ a take-

charge attitude of meetings by "… killing persons with kindness …" to preempt any cultural

misunderstandings. Nicholas was quite complimentary of WMPS' efforts, citing "… the district

is really trying with the digital program for cultural awareness and the required lessons for Black

History Month." Other instructors were of the same accord that said awareness is necessary for

successful interactions with the school community, and more importantly, it is necessary to be

able to assume such posture immediately as needed.

Sub-Question Three

Sub-question three asked, "How do African American male educators in a suburban

school system make meaning of their lived experiences as influenced by race and racism (i.e.,

Critical Race Theory) and their gender (i.e., Tokenism)?" Kendrick and Nile juxtaposed the

teaching profession to the analogy of being in a fishbowl, and the extent to which this idea is magnified for a man of color. The former stated, "I am always wondering if my interactions with persons have anything to do with race, possibly when it is just par for the course." The latter shared that he is "… always aware of the risk of silent racism that may be an ingrained part of an individual that they do not even recognize." Bobby stated that he is "… not necessarily paranoid, but always 'on alert', feeling that I have to evaluate all situations through the lenses of race and racism." Nicholas talked about race in the way he has heard people refer to his school as "… different …", a statement he interprets to refer to diverse students because "… the curriculum is the same for the whole system."

Summary

Chapter 4 began with an overview of the scarcity of African American male educators in the nation's teaching workforce followed by the purpose of the current investigation. After a succinct description of the research site, there were profiles of the 12 educators who participated in this study. The results section, to include the steps of data collection and process of theme development, was then presented. This information included a description of the three sources— semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and a focus group. Finally, the chapter discussed how the teachers' responses informed each of the recurring themes, the central research, and sub-questions for this manuscript.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this investigation was to explore how African American male educators assign meaning to their lived and professional experiences. Following this synopsis of the chapter's content is a review of the study's findings, to include how these results addressed the four research questions. A discussion then ensues of these outcomes in light of the reviewed literature in Chapter 2 and their significance as related to two frameworks, Critical Race Theory and Tokenism. The next section of implications will examine the methodological and practical connotations of the current research. After disclosing the delimitations and limitations, the chapter concludes with recommendations for future exploration and a summary of Chapter 5.

Summary of Findings

The current investigation sought to explore how male educators of color ascribe meaning to their lived and professional encounters in a suburban school system. This hermeneutic phenomenological study was comprised of participants' engaging in semi-structured interviews, an analysis of teacher-provided documents, and a focus group with select respondents. Herein is a succinct recapitulation of the findings as related to how the data addressed the central research and sub-questions.

Central Research Question

The central research inquiry for this investigation was "How do school systems' practices impact the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators?" As racial and gendered minorities in a profession dominated by Caucasian females (Will, 2020), these educators perceived these factors to be inevitable in how they make meaning of their encounters. The official (e.g., course assignments, placement in schools) and de facto (e.g., interactions with

colleagues, stakeholders) practices of the district contribute to Black males' understanding of incidents and occurrences. Some participants shared that they readily embrace opportunities to be conduits for parents of color, are eager to dispel media-perpetuated myths about minorities, and welcome the ability to shape the next generation of students. Others expressed these systemic conventions are reasons for pause, creating situations that force evaluation of situations through the lenses of race and racism.

The lived and professional experience of a Black male in education is inevitably affected, positively and with some challenges, by the nature of being outnumbered. These participants suggested measures they believe would enhance the ways in which they assign significance to their experiences. These notions adhere to the mentioned theme of support and collaboration. Specifically, the teachers spoke about organized sessions to share ideas, thereby attributing greater worth to their roles as professional educators.

Sub-Question One

The first related question for the current study was "How do the systemic procedures (e.g., assignment of courses and duties) of a suburban school district influence the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators?" Placement of instructors in certain classes (e.g., lower-level sessions, those with more at-risk students) and at select locations were recurring aspects that appeared in the participants' responses. All teachers concurred that their race and gender are perceived factors in how they interpret the same. Some individuals equate these measures to tacit inferiority or ability to teach more rigorous content. Other persons have opted to utilize said responsibilities as ways to ensure that minority students are well prepared for life's challenges and those in post-secondary education.

Sub-Question Two

Sub-Question Two for this manuscript was **"**How do systemic interactions with various stakeholders impact the lived and professional experiences of African American male instructors?" Participants' responses to this inquiry included a mixture of perceived cultural misunderstandings and microaggressions that teachers believed to be rooted in race, racism, and their token status as Black men. Nile commented on the "… silent treatment and no response …" that he receives when questioning issues about which he feels are inappropriate exchanges with co-workers. Carvin expressed feeling that he is addressed as someone's "… son …" during dialogue with parents or staff members. Nicholas applauded the school system's efforts to educate employees by requiring lessons of all teachers during Black History Month and digital awareness.

Sub-Question Three

The third sub-question for this study was "How do African American male educators in a suburban school system make meaning of their lived experiences as influenced by race and racism (i.e., Critical Race Theory) and their gender (i.e., Tokenism)?" Kendrick compared classroom instructors to pets in a fishbowl, suggesting such work is laden with scrutiny and examination. Other participants expounded on this notion by saying this fact is compounded by their race and gender. Teachers expressed an incessant preoccupation with reflecting on situations to determine if race, racism, and token status were factors in their interactions with stakeholders. Although the gentlemen expressed having grown accustomed to these unofficial roles, the tenets of these frameworks remain inextricable elements in how men of color ascribe meaning to their lived and professional encounters.

Discussion

The verbiage in this portion of the chapter considers how the study's findings relate to the theoretical and empirical literature discussed in Chapter 2. More specifically, attention is devoted to how the current exploration affirms and divaricates from the extant research. This section concludes with a brief narrative regarding how the included recommendations contribute to the field of study and theory surrounding the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators.

Theoretical Discussion

The theoretical frameworks utilized for this study were Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1977) and Tokenism (Kanter, 1977). The former put forth that persons can make meaning of their lived experiences in ways that relate to race and racism. Moreover, subscribers to CRT assert that landmark decisions, the law, and legal entities are intrinsically designed to favor the majority population of this country, and this situation continually exacerbates the daily plight of persons of color (Bell, 1977). Kanter (1977) theorized that women's circumstances in vocations where they are underrepresented are largely ignored due to their being few in number. Their token status speaks to the lack of inclusion in professional circles, not being readily recognized for their accomplishments that are equal and superior to men, and being heavily scrutinized for missteps that are similar to their counterparts (Kanter, 1977).

All 12 participants shared some aspects of their professional lives via the lens of race and racism. Some instructors, for examples, shared correspondence from an administrator they believed either was racially charged or minimally caused them to reflect on the situation in terms of their race. Given that the male teachers of color may have eventually determined that the situation could have happened to a person of a different race, they still indicated their Blackness

causes them to have to undergo such analysis. Persons in the majority, they stated, likely do not have to evaluate daily interactions based on race and racism.

Justin commented on colleagues' perceptions that Black male teachers can deal with "… the hard population." Michael spoke of his internal pressure and that of co-workers to "… do something such as necktie club …" that would reach out to minority students, a feeling that he attributed to being a person of color. Carvin talked at great length, wondering if the approach parents and staff use to address him is due to his being an African American man. He further elaborated on the "… emotional and mental tolls …" of having to undergo such interactions on a constant basis.

Coupled with this point of view, the instructors pointed out that their race and gender are often amplified by their token status. William expressed that he has been the sole or one of a few men of color in professional spaces for most of his life. Hence, the "… magnifying glass …" is always present, and he feels the need to ensure that all of his actions and words are beyond reproof. James expressed his being called to deal with behavioral issues students of various ethnicities (i.e., other than Caucasian) due to his emblematic status as a Black man. Nile communicated that he has learned to overlook the scrutiny of his race and gender and instead focus on "… helping our children …" as one of few African American men who are teachers.

Empirical Discussion

The extant studies discussed in the literature review explored twelve areas regarding the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators. Following is a discussion that speaks to how the current investigation affirmed, negated, or expounded upon previous research.

Expectations of Black Male Teachers

Several studies put forth that Black male educators often grapple with a myriad of expectations, including athletic assignments, parental surrogacy, and resident disciplinarian, that devalue their academic expertise (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Sandles, 2020; Woodson & Bristol, 2020). Baldridge (2017) likened their daily tasks to those of superheroes whose powers are to serve as the elixir for all matters related to minority students. Some of these notions contravene the inherent personalities of who these educators are and their subsequent approaches to instruction and pedagogy (Brockenbrough, 2015). This intersection of anticipated roles and the essence of one's upbringing may further exacerbate the ways men of color make meaning of their lived and professional experiences.

Participants confirmed many of the discussed assumptions, in addition to delivering lessons at a high level of expertise and rigor. Some individuals expressed satisfaction in taking on such responsibilities as ways of projecting positive images of Black men and contributing to the betterment of society. Others commented that they struggle to balance such functions they perceive to be compounded as a result of their race and gender. Generally, this investigation affirmed portions of this literature and offered degrees of pause with stipulations to others.

Several teachers expressed that they wrestle with multiple roles being expected of them, but James, Justin, and Nile, for instance, stated they readily embrace this opportunity to make a difference for young, Black scholars. John Frank highlighted that he is always conscientious of his race and gender, but he instead chooses to focus on the "… common interest for the kids to do well …" that he believes all races and he have in common. Walter conveyed his feeling of "… genuine collegiality …" with many persons on his staff, but he, too, cautiously mentioned

that such rapports have to be "… treaded differently …" due to his status as one of the few Black male instructors in the school system.

Expectations for Teaching

Young male students of color (i.e., African Americans and Latinos) disproportionately contribute to educational data that speak to the lack of achievement (Carey, 2020). These students are more likely to be enrolled in special education, chronically absent from school, and suspended from daily instruction for extended periods (Warren et al., 2016). Some scholars have argued that ethnically matching, pairing these youngsters with teachers who look like them, can serve to assuage the aforementioned metrics (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Downer et al., 2016; Rasheed et al., 2019).

Without expressly stating this purpose, participants in this study communicated administrators have often relegated them to lower-levels for this reason. Justin responded that there is a "… perception that Black male teachers can deal with that 'hard' population and the co-taught classes." Nile shared that although he realizes the agenda to place students of color in his courses, he views it positively because he looks "… at it as helping the child." This portion of the empirical literature was also affirmed by this study, although the instructors have varied sentiments regarding the same. Kendrick revealed that he has not experienced this phenomenon, largely because the vast majority of his school has few to no minorities. William communicated being a "… role model for all of his kids …" as generally has varied demographics in his courses.

Expectations and Professional Assignments

Some studies put forth that Black teachers prior to *Brown v. BOE* were primarily assigned to work in segregated areas of poverty in schools with minimal resources (Loder-

Jackson et al., 2016; Milner, 2020). Other researchers have propounded this de facto separation remains as most minority instructors are employed under similar circumstances (Ayscue & Orfield 2016; Bohrnstedt et al. 2015; Khalifa et al., 2018). Given that WMPS is a district of mostly Caucasian students, this theme did not appear in either of the three sources of data. William and Walter, for example, work in buildings with higher rates of diversity, but they both admit that they, not a district representative, chose these sites as their preferred schools. John Frank and Justin both work at predominantly Caucasian locations and received no resistance in their placement. This study did not affirm this portion of the extant literature.

These findings suggest that African American male educators are inclined to work in school districts where there are limited minorities. Although the participants who work in buildings with majority populations expressed daily awareness of their race and gender, they espouse their positions as opportunities to dispel myths and show all students that men of color are indeed the consummate professionals. Justin, Michael, and Walter spoke on the importance of having Black male teachers interact with various types of students as many in WMPS may have had limited interactions with persons of color. Moreover, the participants' comments regarding recruitment also suggested other BMTs would be open to work in such environments if deliberately recruited.

Expectations and Tokenism

Kanter (1977) developed the philosophical framework of Tokenism primarily to address the inequity of female representation in vocations dominated by men. Subsequent research augmented this discussion to include the perceived plight of Black men in becoming similar tokens in satisfying collegiate requirements, grappling with expectations of interviews in diverse settings, and ultimately, coping with the reality of being one of few males of color on a teaching

staff (Bristol, 2018; Grissom & Redding, 2016). Whereas participants did not articulate

challenges in placement in a suburban school system, some did address their emblematic status

as a person of color in the workforce.

James expressed his excitement at the addition of another African American to the staff

in saying it was great "… just to see another brother …" with whom he could laugh and

converse. Kendrick suggested that he reflects on almost all interactions because of his token

status, wondering if the encounters were rooted in race and gender. "I take time to step back and

think about if it would have happened with a White person. It's hard to distinguish." Bobby

commented that his token status, style of interacting as a person of color has become "…

contagious …" to all students, good interpersonal relationships of which he is extremely proud.

The teachers in this study affirmed the hypervisibility of being a minority male in the teaching

business and that this notion informs the way they assign significance to their experiences.

Recruitment of Black Male Teachers

Manifold studies attribute the decimated supply of Black teachers to the aftermath of the

Brown v. Board of Education decision (Allen, 2019; Bristol & Goings, 2019; Loder-Jackson et

al., 2016; Meidl, 2019; Milner, 2020). This era marked a period during which several teachers of

color were dismissed from their positions, encountered difficulty with issues of licensure,

assigned to work exclusively with African American students despite recent, federal legislation,

and placed in impoverished buildings to teach content outside of their expertise (Andrews et al.,

2019; López & Burciaga, 2014; Lutz, 2017; Will, 2019). The ensuing section with speak to how

the participants' responses affirmed or did not address recruitment in these areas.

Recruitment and Teacher Education Programs

Studies have posited that teacher education programs are inclined to prepare students to work with suburban students to deliver content with a European bias (Bristol & Goings, 2019; Carver-Thomas, 2018). None of the participants in this study mentioned said perspectives regarding their collegiate experiences. To the contrary, Bobby, Nile, and Michael alluded to having received excellent preparation for the classroom as they originally planned to go into fields that would have reportedly required more stringent expertise. The latter stated that parents send their children to him "… because he is a person they believe has done well for himself." This portion of the research was not confirmed by the current investigation.

Recruitment and Challenges of Licensure

Empirical data has pointed to the viewpoint that African American male educators confront obstacles in securing teaching positions (Bell, 2017; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Additionally, other research has propounded these candidates have also faced difficulty in acquiring passing scores on assessments of licensure (Goodwin, 2018; Petchauer, 2016; Scott & Alexander, 2019). Neither of the 12 participants commented on any barriers in passing required tests or securing a teaching position. Walter, in fact, proclaimed "I felt like I was recruited." Nicholas remarked that he feels a sense of job security because "… we are in the need." Hence, the teachers in this study did not corroborate the aforementioned investigations.

Recruitment as a Function of Critical Race Theory and Tokenism

Bell (1970) and Kanter (1977) put forth that legal constructs and gender-related issues have respectively designated persons of color and women to fixed roles in society. Comparably, the scarcity of Black men in the classroom has forced them to assume functions of an entire race and representative of all persons who look similar to them (Bell, 1970; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

All participants related sentiments, reflections, and encounters of how they assign meaning to their lived experiences based on race, racism, and their emblematic status. These themes recurred throughout the teachers' comments, and the findings of this literature were definitely affirmed by the current investigation.

In speaking about the need for targeted recruitment of African American men, Nicholas shared that the current lack of this group of educators is related to "… years of ideology …" that would need to be considered and rectified. William talked about "… breaking the hurdles of racism to become a teacher …" in reflecting on survival techniques to remain positive with his colleagues and parents. Christian commented that he tries to avoid "… the complexities of their racial thinking …" when it comes to his ability to deliver content at a rigorous level. Carvin indicated that he believes parents of color have "… an immediate sense of comfort …" when they realize that he is Black, possibly granting an assurance that their students are in trustworthy hands.

Black Male Teachers as Disciplinarians and the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Baldridge (2017) proposed that slavery, racism, and other atrocities have situated minority students as those that need to be controlled and redressed. Warren (2015) elaborated on this idea, stating the majority of our nation's teachers (i.e., Caucasian women) are likely unaware of their cultural misunderstandings and the mentality they deliver in attempting to salvage these same youth. Expulsion, suspension, and other disciplinary measures tend to occur more frequently for African American males than other student groups, and as such, Black men are positioned as disciplinarians who contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (Skiba et al., 2016; Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). Participants in this exploration attested to their de facto roles as those who have alleged elixirs for working with minority students. No one, however, sought to

correlate these responsibilities with the idea of perpetuating the disproportionate number of Black males who are represented in the penal systems.

James expressed that he is rarely asked, but assumed to deal with students of color who may not be enrolled in his courses, believing that he has "… some magic for our children." Nile embraces this responsibility because he likes to "… help the child …" and feels great about shaping the next generation. Carvin noted that he is frequently requested to deescalate student issues "… purely because of being a Black male …", to the extent that others are "… absolved of their obligation to learn how to work with such students." Kendrick shared spiritual beliefs and his desire to emulate the teachings of Jesus Christ by "… not only helping our students, but to show all students a better way."

Black Male Teachers—Masculinity and Hypersexuality

Societal influences and images have preconceived notions of how masculinity should manifest with minority youth (Carey, 2020; Warren 2020; Woodson & Bristol, 2020). This obligation entails stern disciplinary measures, illicit proclivities, and interactions with stakeholders that may be diametrically opposed to the way Black male teachers were reared (Laing, 2017; Mosley et al., 2017; Todd et al., 2016). Additional research has suggested that some African American male educators have sought to suppress their caring dispositions due to communities' stereotypical expectations (Bass, 2020; Bass & Alston, 2018). The participants in this study did not corroborate the idea of being perceived as persons who were hypersexualized, lacked self-control with young persons, or objectified their female students. Persons, however, did attest to the latter finding that they indeed possess a spiritual disposition regarding their work and view their vocations as divinely inspired. Walter shared that he reminded a colleague of the sacred nature of their jobs when she made "… a tasteless and unnecessary comment …" about a

student's family. Kendrick commented that he seeks to emulate "… Jesus Christ who was the greatest teacher who ever lived."

Black Male Teachers as Surrogate Fathers

Hicks (2018) explored the positive impact of African American professionals on students of color as somatic role models, even given the possibility of limited communication with these adults. In other words, there is a positive correlation between minorities seeing a Black teacher, counselor, therapist, or other certificated individual in buildings as persons to whom they can venerate with minimal interactions. The educators in this investigation overwhelmingly affirmed the aspects of this literature not only for Black students, but for persons in every other student group as well. John Frank spoke eloquently about his desire to be a guiding source for all races and sharing that Caucasians embrace his approach when they realize "… we have a common interest for the kids to do well." James expressed his interest in helping African Americans, but he also shared his goal is "… to be big on relationships with all students …" so they realize their maximum potential. Michael reiterated the need and benefit for all students to see "… Black men in professional spaces …" so there is an accurate representation of "… who we are." William also verbalized his delight at being a "… paternal figure and role model for students of all nationalities."

Black Male Teachers – Interactions with Colleagues

Intense scrutiny (i.e., hypervisibility) and lack of recognition (i.e., invisibility) characterize the intersections of work environments for Black males as results of their race and gender (Brown, 2019; Goings, 2015). Thus, their interactions with colleagues may be exacerbated by these notions when they are in smaller numbers compared to other ethnicities (Bristol 2020). Teachers in the current study asseverated this concept in speaking about their

beliefs, perceptions, and exchanges with other staff members. Justin explained his intentional efforts in "… not being the angry Black man because we cannot go off on a tangent. We are on a different level. We have to talk differently. We can't use colloquialisms. There's the whole thing of code switching as well."

Michael suggested that he still grapples with the best way to address issues with his colleagues, wanting to maintain a professional rapport with his co-workers. "I feel that I am perceived as the angry Black man just because I am matter of fact with what I'm saying, especially when it comes to doing right by our children." Bobby conveyed that he "… rolls with the punches …", and irrespective of persons who have "… no empathy or act a little shady …", he remains determined to "… work with his Department to do the best for the students of WMPS."

The information and responses provided by the instructors in this study suggest numerous considerations. Several individuals addressed the compelling influence of relatives, colleagues, teachers, and administrators to become an educator. Hence, it stands to reason that many more persons such as students who are uncertain of their post-secondary plans or those who may not be on schools' radars could benefit from such conversations. Other participants mentioned they intended to pursue other, more lucrative vocations. The impact of role models who invested the time to build relationships and engage in dialogue with them have made a difference in their choice of careers. School systems should pursue avenues to pool resources and work within regions to attract more males of color into the classroom.

All 12 participants spoke repeatedly about the need to convene for support and collaboration. At the inception of the virtual focus group, Walter expressed that he "… needed a moment …" to process that there were 10 African American educators on his screen, an instant

of euphoria. Given my 11 years in the school system, I had only met two of the gentlemen with whom I conducted this research. It is the intrinsic nature of most human beings to yearn for belonging and a sense of fulfillment. School systems should establish mechanisms for Black male teachers to assemble with a focus on supportive dialogue, professional alliances, serving as mentors to minority youth, and modes of attracting other African American men into the profession.

Participants articulated differing opinions regarding their presumed roles as resident experts on cultural nuances that pertain to students of color. Approximately half of the teachers conveyed a welcoming disposition about diffusing situations that otherwise might result in more severe disciplinary measures for Black students. Others spoke positively about their race and gender as hospitable factors for African American parents. A third group expressed concern that the dearth of non-Caucasian teachers would invariably result in unfavorable behavioral and academic situations for students who do not have sufficient advocacy. School systems should endeavor to sponsor more sessions of cultural diversity and forums for teachers to comprehend the ever-changing nature of the students they serve.

Implications

The significance and inferences of the current investigation are herein discussed. This section details the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the findings to include recommendations for educational stakeholders such as district office personnel, human resource recruiters, and post-secondary institutions.

Theoretical

This exploration was guided by two theoretical frameworks, Critical Race Theory (Bell, 1970) and Kanter's (1977) precept of Tokenism. Bell, a civil rights attorney, and other counsel

developed Critical Legal Studies (CLS) which endeavored to examine issues of social justice as related to how courts' decisions intersected with the ideas of race and racism. Those who subscribed to CLS put forth that landmark decisions in this nation largely served to benefit Caucasians and persons of higher socioeconomic status while having the purported façade of benefitting the disenfranchised. Ladson-Billings (1998) and a group of scholars further developed these ideas to create CRT to analyze comparable issues in the field of education. The theory argues that inequities have become normalized in our system of schools, and many associated interactions and decisions are inextricably related to the construct of racism.

Rosabeth Kanter's signature work *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977) treated the plight of women in occupational roles traditionally held by gentlemen. She put forth the concept of tokenism to elucidate the less than favorable conditions women experienced allegedly due to their numerical proportion (Kanter, 1977). Vocational equity, the framework posits, approaches realization when a given group reaches at least 15% of the total number of employees within a corporation (Kanter, 1977; Zimmer, 1988). Bristol (2018) explored how this same phenomenon pervades in schools and districts wherein Black male educators are sparse (Bristol & Goings, 2019). Accordingly, these frameworks provided optimal lenses through which to consider how these teachers make meaning of their lived and professional experiences.

Two themes that emerged from the current manuscript, cultural nuances and parental surrogacy, spoke specifically and substantiated the tenets of Critical Race Theory. Teachers recounted incidents of microaggressions and serving as agents to diffuse volatile situations perceived to be of racial origins. Some instructors reported they willingly espouse these roles while others proclaimed that all employees should be adept at ethnic awareness. Another group of educators chronicled the positive impact their Black male instructors had on their lives,

academic pursuits, and ultimate decisions to enter the profession. These persons expressed

sentiments of obligation to be equally as influential on today's youth in loco parentis and as role

models.

This study's findings affirmed many of the tenets of Critical Race Theory and Tokenism.

Black male educators reported numerous experiences to which they assigned significance based

on their race, perceived issues of racism, and their token status as African American men in the

teaching profession. Teacher recruitment programs, colleges of education, and school systems

should endeavor to create professional spaces that foster dialogue based on these theoretical

frameworks. The purpose of such sessions would be threefold—to inform decision makers about

the unparalleled conditions that affect males of color in this vocation, to allow these individuals

to express concerns regarding how they make meaning of said encounters, and to develop

processes that contribute to the persistence and longevity of these instructors.

Empirical

The findings of the current manuscript aligned with many of the themes in the recent

literature. Participants affirmed the need to be deliberate in efforts to recruit African American

males, not just minorities of any ethnicity. Persons reflected on the influences of their instructors

as reasons for becoming role models in the classroom. There were recurring statements regarding

the need to collaborate with other male teachers of color and their de facto roles as parental

surrogates and disciplinarians. Most of the teachers' experiences departed from studies

suggesting that Black men face challenges in teacher education programs and the process of

obtaining state certification.

As noted, a recurring theme of the study's findings pertained to restructuring the ways in

which WMPS (and other systems) recruit Black men into the teaching profession. Some

participants suggested establishing a career ladder for persons who are currently employed as support personnel in the school system. These persons, mostly minorities, are reported to have a vested interest in the district and often coach, sponsor clubs, and other activities to supplement their income. An effort to investigate who might be interested in such pursuits, coupled with sessions to provide details about tuition reimbursement, opportunities to shadow current employees, and representatives from local colleges, may prove to be a worthwhile investment. Tracking the success of this endeavor would also be an initiative that could be replicated in other districts throughout the nation.

Practical

As an African American male educator, my personal interest in undertaking this study was to understand better the ways men of color ascribe meaning to their experiences in school systems. This comprehension, I believed, would also inform necessary measures to attract and retain other instructors into the teaching profession. The participants affirmed many of my presuppositions and the extant literature, suggesting practical viewpoints regarding how to ameliorate their encounters and possibly to recruit other collegians as well. These recommendations are herein included for the consideration of local agencies.

Given their emblematic status, respondents would welcome a systemically endorsed structure to convene with the district's leaders, share ideas among the group, and collaborate on a myriad of topics. This framework would provide a basic opportunity for these educators to meet and become familiar with persons' areas of expertise. Many of the participants indicated they were unaware of the others' existence until the focus group took place. These meetings would also provide a platform to unite with other Black male professionals in the area who would be asked to offer mentoring and internships to students of color. Additionally, the group would

endeavor to embrace individuals who show interest or potential of becoming an instructor, thereby increasing the pool of African American men who hopefully enter the teaching profession.

Delimitations and Limitations

The current hermeneutic phenomenological investigation was conducted to fill a gap in the research by examining ways African American males make meaning of their lived and professional experiences as impacted by the practices of a school system. One delimitation included limiting participants to African American male educators and to only 12 of the 22 at the research site. The study made use of purposeful sampling in recruiting solely persons who were certificated individuals and identified as the mentioned ethnicity. No other racial groups or females were considered for inclusion.

The limitations of this study must also be considered in reviewing and applying its findings on a more global scale. All respondents were secondary (i.e., middle school and high school) employees from a single suburban school system. Whereas Creswell (2018) endorses a small number of individuals who are thought to have shared a common phenomenon for this type of investigation, the 12 participants may also be viewed as a limitation, especially in light of the fact that there are 10 other African American males who also would have qualified to contribute their perspectives. Notwithstanding efforts to suspend judgment by bracketing my personal biases (Colazzi, 1978; Neubauer et al., 2018), I transcribed all data and reviewed the same with each teacher. I sought to increase the accuracy of recurrent themes and transferability of the study by collecting and triangulating information from three sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Recommendations for Future Research

Considering personal interests and the marginalized representation of the Black man in the teaching profession, the current study endeavored to amplify the sentiments of this group of educators. Chapter 2 enumerated various themes that appear in the current empirical data, but a conspicuous gap was consideration of how this group of educators' experiences are influenced by the systemic practices of the districts where they are employed. Several recommendations are discussed for additional research, to include specific populations and types of designs to be employed.

Hermeneutic investigations of African American male instructors who hail from teacher education programs at HBCUs versus PWIs may yield significant findings. Considering the mission of many Black colleges to provide a nurturing undergraduate experience to its students, participants may have varied perspectives regarding their preparation for teaching and becoming extended role models for students of color. Persons who graduate from PWIs, comparatively, may report increased determination to help their race after challenges that may be rooted in race and racism with fewer minority instructors. Additionally, such an exploration could provide insights regarding how teachers' choice of universities affects the demographic settings in which they ultimately choose to work.

Most of the studies cited in Chapter 2 took place in urban settings with high populations of various ethnic groups. The current study took place in a school system that is predominantly Caucasian. Additional qualitative research involving Black male teachers in similar systems may affirm the themes that emerged in this manuscript. It would also be noteworthy to examine if African American instructors in several such districts make meaning of their experiences in similar ways as those who work in predominantly minority districts. The ways that parents,

administrators, and other stakeholders contribute to these encounters may likely affect the outcomes of such data as well.

Although Creswell (2018) suggests that an inherent challenge in ethnography is the researcher's understanding of cultural anthropology, said study conducted by a Caucasian of Black male teachers would offer some invaluable perspectives. This type of study would assist the investigator in internalizing the plight of a different ethnicity and hopefully provide information that he would disseminate to other non-African American educators. The approach may simultaneously yield ways for teachers of color to process information (i.e., making meaning of lived experiences) that considers viewpoints of a different race. The subsequent presentation of these findings by the participants and the researcher would be an invaluable, courageous conversation for all involved parties.

Summary

This section began with an overview of the chapter's contents, a summary of the study's findings, and a restatement of the research questions. The discussion addressed how the current findings aligned to the resulting themes of the empirical research in Chapter 2. Theoretical, empirical, and practical implications were considered along with recommendations for each of the mentioned areas. From this section, one salient point was the participants' repeated desire to have a systemically endorsed platform for support and collaboration. A second worthwhile notion was a clarion call for more investigations that explore how this marginalized group of educators assigns significance to work-related encounters to attract and retain more such teachers into the profession. The researcher's delimitations and other constraints were then highlighted before offering directions for additional research and a summary of the current study.

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APPENDIX A: LIBERTY UNIVERSITY IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 8, 2021

Thomas Cash
Verlyn Evans

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY20-21-432 A Phenomenological Study of the Lived and Professional Experiences of African American Male Instructors: Functions of the Practices of School Systems

Dear Thomas Cash, Verlyn Evans:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the date of the IRB meeting at which the protocol was approved: January 8, 2021. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make modifications in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update submission to the IRB.
These submissions can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B: ELECTRONIC CORRESPONDENCE TO PARTICIPANTS

Month, Day, Year

Esteemed Colleagues:

The purpose of this e-mail is to solicit your participation in an investigative study. I am a doctoral student pursuing a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Education at Liberty University. The goal of my research is to explore and ascribe meaning to the lived and professional experiences of African American male instructors. You were selected as a prospective candidate because the Division of Human Resources provided your school contact information as an individual who identifies as the mentioned race and gender.

All persons who participate in all aspects of the study will be awarded a gift card of $20. Your involvement would be comprised of the following:

- Participate in a semi-structured interview in a virtual format regarding your lived and professional experiences as a teacher and subsequent discussion to ensure the accuracy of the reported findings. I will transcribe parts of the conversation with all references to proper nouns as pseudonyms.
- Provide one to two artifacts (e.g., e-mail, correspondence from stakeholder) and accompanying verbiage/explanation that you believe speak to your lived and professional experiences as a teacher and participate in subsequent discussion to ensure the accuracy of the reported findings.
- Participate in a semi-structured focus study in a virtual format to discuss your lived and professional experiences as a teacher and subsequent discussion to ensure the accuracy of the reported findings.

To participate in this study, please click on the link provided which will take you to a Google document that is the informed consent form. Should you have additional questions, please e-mail me at tcash4@liberty.edu, or you may call 240-602-6555.

Respectfully,

Thomas DeWayne Cash

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of the Lived and Professional Experiences ofAfrican American Male Instructors: Functions of the Practices of School Systems
Principal Investigator: Thomas DeWayne Cash, doctoral candidate, Liberty University
Co-Investigators: Verlyn Evans, Ed.D., Committee Chair, Liberty University,James Swezey, Ed.D., Methodologist, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a male instructor in the K-12 sector who identifies as African American. Taking part in this researchproject is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part inthis research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore and ascribe meaning to the lived and professional experiences of African male educators as functions of the practices (i.e., systemic procedures andinteractions with stakeholders) of a suburban school system.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a semi-structured interview in a virtual platform to answer questions aboutyour perceptions of your lived and professional experiences as an educator. This interview will be recorded (only with your consent) and transcribed. It should last no longer than 30 minutes. You will have the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the transcript and any assigned meanings/categories to your statements.
2. Provide/discuss no more than two artifacts that speak/spoke to a lived and professional experience and discuss the same with the principal investigator. This interview will be recorded (only with your consent) and transcribed. This discussion should take no longerthan 30 minutes. You will have the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the transcript and any assigned meanings/categories to your statements.
3. Participate, if selected based on the outcomes of the interview and discussion of artifacts,in a focus group to answer questions about the themes that emerged from the mentioned interview and discussion. This focus group (only with your consent) will be recorded andtranscribed. It should last no longer than 30 minutes. You will have an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the transcript and any assigned meanings/categories to your statements.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants may not receive a direct benefit from this study. Persons who participate in the focus

group may benefit by sharing their experiences with other educators. Participants will

have opportunities to express how they make meaning of their lived and professional experiences as African American male educators to effectuate possible change in systemic procedures thatinfluence said encounters.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you wouldencounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only
the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be confidential. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location (i.e., a virtual platform) where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in futurepresentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews, discussions of artifacts, and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased.Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, othermembers of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of thegroup.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study with a $20 Visa gift card, the maximum amount allowed by the school system. This compensation will not be offered until the completion of the focus group study for all persons, those who participate in the interview and provide documents for analysis and those who participate in the focus group. E-mail addresses orschool location will be requested for compensation purposes (i.e., to send the gift card via interoffice courier to your building); however, this information will be pulled and separated fromyour responses to maintain your confidentiality.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as a central office supervisor in the school system, but he has no direct or indirect supervision or authority over any potential participant in this study. To limit potential orperceived conflicts, the identity of all participants will be reported as pseudonyms, and all responses will be confidential. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationshipwill affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect

your
current or future relations with Liberty University or ███████████████████████ .
If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any
time.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email
address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data
collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not
be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to
the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study Thomas DeWayne Cash. You may ask any questions you
have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Mr. Cash at ███████
███ or tcash4@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr.
Evans at vevans@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone
other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board,
1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at
irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what
the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your
records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions
about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the
information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have
received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐   The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation
in this study.

_____   _____
Printed Subject Name   Signature & Date

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

Pseudonyms	Level (ES, MS, HS)	Degree(s)	Years of Experience
William	HS	Bachelor's	20-25
John Frank	HS	Master's	20-25
Carvin	HS	Master's	0-5
Walter	MS	Master's	25-30
James	HS	Master's	20-25
Nile	MS	Bachelor's	5-10
Kendrick	MS	Bachelor's	5-10
Justin	HS	Master's	10-15
Nicholas	MS	Master's	10-15
Michael	HS	Master's	5-10
Bobby	HS	Bachelor's	0-5
Christian	MS	Master's	10-15

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANTS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Central Research Question:	Introduction & Warm-Up to Establish Rapport:	Interview Questions
How do African American male instructors in a suburban school district describe their lived and professional experiences?		1. Share your thoughts regarding the current state of Black males in teaching. 2. Who figured into your decision to become a teacher? 3. What other factors influenced your decision to become an educator?
	Sub-Question 1: How do the systemic practices of a suburban school district influence the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators?	
		4. How do the district's practices in general influence your role as an African American male educator? 5. How do the district's procedure influence your role as an African American male educator? 6. How might these practices be perpetuated or altered to influence your role as an African American male educator?
	Sub-Question 2: How do systemic interactions with various stakeholders impact the lived and professional experiences of African American educators?	
		7. How do your colleagues perceive your roles as an

		African American male teacher? 8. How do parents and other stakeholders perceive your role as a Black male teacher?
	Sub-Question 3: How do African American male educators in a suburban school system make meaning of their lived experiences as influenced by race and racism (i.e., Critical Race Theory) and their gender (i.e., Tokenism)?	9. How do you define a lived or professional experience that is attributable to your race and gender? 10. How do you distinguish between professional experiences that may apply to anyone versus those that you perceive as rooted in race and gender? 11. Talk to me any other professional encounters that you attribute to being a Black male educator.
	Conclusion:	
		12. What else regarding the state of African American men in teaching would you like to share?

APPENDIX F: PILOT STUDY – PROTOCOL AND PROMPTS

The researcher will arrive at the offices of the participants prior to the designated time to reiterate the scope of the study, purpose of the pilot of the study, and to establish protocols for asking and transcribing responses. Additionally, the researcher will share the process for verifying the accuracy of captured data at the conclusion of the study and explain that their recommendations for edits will be welcomed. This process will assist in ensuring that questions are open-ended, devoid of bias, and contribute to the goal of answering the central research and sub-questions.

Central Research Question:	Introduction & Warm-Up to Establish Rapport:	Interview Questions
How do African American male instructors in a suburban school district describe their lived and professional experiences?		1. Share your thoughts regarding the current state of Black males in teaching. 2. Who figured into your decision to become a teacher? 3. What other factors influenced your decision to become an educator?
	Sub-Question 1: How do the systemic practices of a suburban school district influence the lived and professional experiences of African American male educators?	
		4. How do the district's policies, procedures, and practices influence your role as an African American educator? 5. How do the district's procedures (e.g., duties, course assignments) influence your role as an African American male educator? 6. How might these policies be perpetuated or altered to impact your

		professional experiences as a Black male educator?
	Sub-Question 2: How do systemic interactions with various stakeholders impact the lived and professional experiences of African American educators?	
		7. Describe your primary roles as an African American male teacher. 8. How do your colleagues perceive your roles as an African American male teacher? 9. How do parents and other stakeholders perceive your role as a Black male teacher? 10. What strategies should school systems put in place to perpetuate or alter your perceived roles as a Black male teacher?
	Sub-Question 3: How do African American male educators in a suburban school system make meaning of their lived experiences as influenced by race and racism (i.e., Critical Race Theory) and their gender (i.e., Tokenism)?	11. How do you define a lived or professional experience that is attributable to your race and gender? 12. How do you distinguish between professional experiences that may apply to anyone versus those that you perceive as rooted in race and gender? 13. Talk to me any other professional encounters that you attribute to being a Black male educator.

	Conclusion:	
		14. What else regarding the state of African American men in teaching would you like to share?

APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT'S SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Semi-Structured Interview with Walter, January 14, 2021

Walter, introduce yourself to me.

I am an educator, and a person who loves to inspire and motivate young people. I have been at my school for numerous years, and I love the students here.

Share your thoughts regarding the current state of Black males in teaching.

It's pretty sad. I went to school in a nearby city. I had several male teachers that were Black, mostly women, but there were quite a few male teachers, especially when I got to the upper grades. Many of my teachers were males. I remember that in elementary school the gym teacher was a Black male. We had one math teacher that was a Black male. In junior high school, there were a lot more men. It was common to see Black men in the classroom. About half of the teachers were males. At the lower levels, there were more females.

Who figured into your decision to become a teacher?

I went to a magnet school. I was going to major in ███████. There was an upperclassman who was an education major. We were just talking. I admired him. He was a good guy. He was handicapped. His arms were a lot shorter. He didn't let that stop him. He continued to be motivated. He suggested I become a teacher. We need more Black males in the profession. I do have teachers in my family, some close and some other people. It didn't seem foreign to me. My mother was a teacher in a pre-school. She had an AA in ECE, and she was a sitter. I was around a lot of kids growing up. So, I enrolled in an education program.

What other factors influenced your decision to become an educator?

… just wanting to do a good job for society, the students, and be a role model to students of color. I think you get into the job and do the best you can. I think the profession has gone down

in a lot of ways. I think the pandemic has shown that teachers are needed and important. We really do change students' lives.

How do the district's practices generally influence your role as an African American male educator?

A lot of times, I am the only male, and definitely the only Black male a lot of times. I don't know if the issue is that we're being overlooked or not recruited. I felt like I was recruited. I started teaching many years ago. I actually had a job before I graduated. I realized WMPS was dedicated to various programs for students, and so I stayed. I have dealt with a lot of stuff. I have been called Mr. Blackie. Students have said "You're pretty nice for a colored man." It was a learning experience. I have had to plant my feet because it would have been easy to leave. One reason I stayed at ▇▇▇ is because we have diversity on our side as opposed to places like ▇▇▇▇▇. ▇▇▇▇ is not that bad. I wouldn't want to teach in ▇▇▇▇ or ▇▇▇▇.

How do the district's procedures influence your role as an African American male educator?

I can't say that I have had an adverse experience in this regard. My school is different. All the kids who want to take my classes are usually able to do so. I can see this playing out for Black men in high school that if you know how to play basketball, then you should go coach.

How might these practices and procedures be perpetuated or altered to impact your experiences as a Black male teacher?

The system should do more in working with Black children. I think there's a lack of understanding. Who do you have as your administrators, and what message are you sending? Is there a mixture of men and women? When people walk through the doors, those are the first people they see. If you're a minority walking in the building, and you don't see a person of color,

how does that make you feel? Do you have a place here? That's important, as a school system. You have to diversify your administration. This move would definitely help more Black men, and likely Black women as well, feel more wanted and needed in a school. It would make us feel that have support in places of leadership. When you look at your populations in your schools, as time goes on, it will become more and more diverse. Do you keep the status quo going, or do you say we should try something else? I think of the situation in various schools. I am not happy with having all Caucasians as administrators, and this continues to happen in a lot of places. I'm not knocking their credentials, but it sends the wrong message. That has nothing with ability. That has everything to do with perception, perception for students, families, and us, the teachers.

How do your colleagues perceive your role as an African American male educator?

Occasionally, some colleagues will put a student in my class with whom they're having problems. I guess it is to show them a different way. They put people in my class just to be a good influence on them. I have to say that I welcome these opportunities as long as it doesn't become just my responsibility. I used to play motivational videos.

How do parents and other stakeholders perceive your role as a Black male teacher?

Nobody is overt. If they don't like me, they're not overt about their dislike of me. I'm sure some people aren't happy when they see a Black man in that classroom, but I can't do anything about that. That goes back to what we were talking about. Do you want to see diversity on your staff? Some people don't like diversity. That comes in when you have diversity training. Some people don't want to talk about those things. They have stuff hidden inside of them that they don't want to come out. The only way you're going to move forward is to look at your past and acknowledge that it happened. Denial keeps everything going. Our school system could do more in this regard.

What strategies should school systems put in place to perpetuate or alter your perceived roles as a Black male teacher?

Well, as I have shared. We really need to take a look at people in our administrative posts. I'll even say school-based and those in other positions. Can we target people, I mean in a good way, to get them trained for positions of leadership? Leadership sets the tone for a building. I believe more people of color, not just African Americans, but different races, would be more inclined to come to our schools to diversify our staff if we started at the top.

How do you distinguish between professional experiences that may apply to anyone versus that you perceived as rooted in race and gender?

I had a situation maybe three years ago. I took a student's phone away from her. I received a slight reprimand about it. I talked to some white female teachers who had the same thing, and there was no reprimand. It's the subtle things that show where a person's heart is. OK, I know who you are. I find that sometimes being a Black male, sometimes people, I don't know, people are OK, and then, they're not OK. How they feel depends on the weather of the day. People can act really funny. If you're in public and dressed a certain way, people respond to you in a certain way. It's hard to make that distinction. You find that you always, at least many times, have to ask yourself if things happened to you just because of your color or whether it was something that could have happened to anyone else.

Talk to me any other professional encounters that you attribute to being a Black male educator.

I think we have pretty much covered it.

What else regarding the state of African American men in teaching would you like to share?

I hope that our system, all systems in the state, and the nation will begin to do more to attract more people of color. Many of us will be retiring soon. They may not have other Black men to replace us, and that would be sad for the students.

APPENDIX H: THEME DEVELOPMENT

Theme Development	
Themes	In Vivo Codes from the Participants' Words
Scarcity	Insufficiency, lack
Role Model	Calling, giving back
Recruitment and Collaboration	Target, deliberate, mirror student diversity
Parental Surrogacy and Academic Savior	Magic, whisperer, in loco parentis
Cultural Nuances	Subtleties, microaggressions, differences
Race, Racism, and Tokenism	Silent interactions, apprehensions, sole, alone