

A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF THE CHALLENGES AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE  
TEACHERS ENCOUNTER IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOM

by

Cherail Nicole Pollard

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

Sharon Michael-Chadwell, Ed.D. Committee Chair

Ellen Ziegler, Ed. D., Committee Member

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this multi-case study was to understand the perceptions of African American male teachers on the challenges of teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. The problem was African American males' voices, challenges, pedagogies, and physical presence are left out of the foundation of teacher education, specifically in early childhood. The theories guiding this study are the critical race theory and culturally responsive pedagogy. Twelve participants were chosen for this study. The participants were Black males that taught pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. Data were collected through individual virtual interviews, virtual focus groups, and letter writing. Data were then analyzed using Yin's five-step data analysis (a) compiling the data, (b) disassembling the data, (c) reassembling the data, (d) interpreting the meaning of the data, and (e) concluding the data. The data lead to significant themes contributing to the challenges they face in the classroom. The study findings provided a better understanding of the challenges they encounter and will benefit Black males who currently or potentially want to teach in the early childhood classroom.

*Keywords:* early childhood, challenges, African American males

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Janice Pollard, who constantly prayed for me when I wanted to give up. Thank you for not giving up on me and knowing that I could do it; your prayers are why I made it. I love you more than you will ever know.

To my father, Frankie Pollard, you think I can do anything. I can hear you now telling everyone my baby girl is a doctor. Keep fighting; you will overcome cancer like you have so many other things. I love you so much.

To my big sister Tyshemia Ross you are so amazing; you do not know how much your words mean to me; you always say you look up to me. Well, I look up to you; you are my best friend and someone I can depend on. I love you, big sister.

To my favorite little person, Jayce Mitchell, you mean the world to me. I love you more than you will ever know. You are only seven years old and have impacted my life in many ways. To be so young, you are a fighter, and because of you, I am here now. I love you, nephew.

To the rest of my family, friends, and sorors, the distinguished ladies of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., your continuous support, and encouragement helped me throughout this journey.

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I acknowledge the participants who took the time out of their lives to assist me with this dissertation; without you, I would not be here; thank you for sharing your stories and being open about the challenges you face.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study was to explore the perceptions of African American male teachers on the challenges of teaching in an early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom. The background information provides a historical context, offering insights regarding factors contributing to the lack of African American male teachers. Social background is discussed considering the lack of diversity among classroom educators. The theoretical framework provides lenses to analyze philosophical considerations. The problem and purpose statements present detailed information regarding the area deficient in the current literature, followed by the significance of the study. Three research questions were developed. A listing of frequently used terms and their definitions is supplied to facilitate the reading of this manuscript.

### **Background**

The statistics indicate a need for African American teachers in classrooms throughout the nation (Duncan, 2019). Specifically, there is an absence of African American males teaching in elementary schools (Wright et al., 2017). Often male teachers were recruited to middle and high schools to organize and participate in athletic programs (Wright et al., 2017). At the elementary level, schools tend to not to focus on recruitment of male teachers. Because of the issue, schools lack African American males in the classroom, impacting students' success, especially African American boys (Thomas & Warren, 2017). Black males are constructed as "pedagogical kinds"; they are educators whose objectives are secure, administer, and govern the unruly Black male in schools (Bristol & Mentor, 2018, p.53).

The undocumented voices of African American male educators within early childhood education can be attributed to several factors. First, the educational sector lacks many males (Sule et al., 2018). Fewer than 25% of teachers in the United States are male, and this percentage decreases in the early childhood education field (Election results, 2019). Only 1% of teachers are African American males, equating to approximately 35,000 public school teachers in the United States, most being middle and high school levels (Election results, 2019).

### **Historical Context**

Lutz (2017) proposed that 100,000 Black teachers and principals served the youth of color in desegregated schools before 1954. In keeping with higher concentrations of African Americans in the southeastern United States, more than 75% of this total was in the same region (Lutz, 2017). The landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, proved to have a decimating effect on the supply of people of color instructors for decades (Bristol & Goings, 2018). Brown et al., (2018) and Redding (2019) argued the country has yet to recoup from this professional destruction, as evidenced by the recent and limited supply of Black teachers.

The paucity 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, more than 100,000 Black teachers and principals were in the nation's segregated schools (Sule et al., 2018). Other figures have suggested this figure represented 50% of all professionals of color in the U.S. (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Since this historical highpoint, the nation has strived to replenish a sufficient supply of Black teachers to coincide with the rising increase of students of the same demographic (Rodríguez-Mojica et al., 2020). Although 52% of today's public-school attendees are



minorities, Black instructors comprise only 20% of this workforce (Pabon, 2016; Rodríguez-Mojica et al., 2020). The advent of newly established careers and affirmative action now afford people of color student's opportunities to pursue more profitable options other than teaching (Taysum & Ayanlaja, 2020). Colleges and school districts have partnered to recruit and retain African American men into classrooms to fill this void (Andrews et al., 2019). However, there remains a significant shortage of teachers of color.

### **Social Context**

African American students in classes with a same-race teacher have significantly lower office suspension, office referrals, and expulsion (Lindsey & Hart, 2017). This data indicates these students and their instructors may have social rapport that culturally inform the redirection of misbehavior. Wright et al. (2017) reported that students of color exhibited more favorable social adjustments in expressing behaviors. Specifically, African American students were less likely to employ inappropriate behavior 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. African American students also reported that ethnically matched instructors buffer stereotypes of their race (Bryan et al., 2016). Chernig and Halpin (2016) also suggested the overall shortage of male teachers of color can influence other races to view them as unprofessional, thereby preserving stereotypical perceptions of Black men often portrayed in the media (Bryan et al., 2016). Therefore, when students encounter ethnically diverse classroom teachers, they cultivate more objective, impartial perceptions of their surroundings (Chernig & Halpin, 2016).

### **Theoretical Context**

Contemporary researchers including Ladson-Billings (2009), Losen (2011), and Mezuk (2009) suggested a connection between African American male students' school experiences and their virtual non-existence in the teaching profession. Furthermore, it is well documented that K–12 schools have not been a welcoming and nurturing space for African American male teachers, and schools have been hostile places for many African American males (Loosen, 2011). This lack of cultural responsiveness to this group had painted bleak and distorted images of this population's academic and professional trajectories at all grade levels, even before school began. King (1993) discovered a limited number of African American males in the teaching profession.

A case study approach will be utilized to document why African American teachers are essential and the distinctive factors that influence the limited presence of African American teachers. Rezai-Rashti and Martino (2010) revealed that people of color do not choose to teach because the salary, prestige, and social mobility are low relative to available alternative jobs. Kleen and Glock (2018) found countless studies showed the absence of people of color teachers affects the academic performance of people of color students. Furthermore, particularly in low-income areas, Blacks sometimes fail to meet middle-class teachers' image and acculturation expectations (Becker, 1952).

### **Problem Statement**

The problem is African American males' voices, challenges, pedagogies, and physical presence are left out of the foundation of teacher education, specifically early childhood. Allen (2019) suggested conducting more research to "create knowledge with Black male teachers to learn how their pedagogical performance styles can support Black males in early childhood education" (p. 219). Similarly, conducting more research with Black male teachers can help move beyond deficit constructions of the Black male teacher (i.e., savior and supermen), which

inspires many educators to believe that any Black male teacher can help enhance Black boys' academic outcomes, particularly in early childhood education. Recently, writing and research have also tried to describe, convey, and unpack the purpose, function, and meaning(s) of Black teachers and their significance in K–12 education (Thomas, 2020). Although necessary and imperative, the research does not draw attention to the contribution and challenges that Black males offer to the practice of K–12 education. This same research centered on the need for Black teachers to add perspective, balance, and ethnic minority presence to K–12 education (Boser, 2014). Still, the research weakness was that it focused overwhelmingly on Black female teachers and predominantly elementary education (Redding, 2019). African American males have been considered misunderstood, maladjusted, and devalued. Intellectuals and scholars such as Kunjufu (2011, 2012, and 2013) have described the challenges in various aspects of life that many Black men bear and continue to bear in America. Kunjufu attempted to be prescriptive and descriptive in their examinations of the matters that concern Black males in America.

The status of Black men has come a long way since slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, and Jim Crow. However, the strivings of Black males concerning their worth, identities, position, and abilities be a source of dispute. W.E.B. Du Bois (1995) posed the question, "How does it feel to be a problem?" (p. 43); he was speaking to the unique existence that Black people faced here in America. This personal, social, and existential question can be applied to Black males whose challenges and perspectives are considered to provide no significant impact on humanity and have been rendered all but worthless.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this multi-case study was to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom.

At this stage, challenges are defined as obstacles, difficulties, and or problems. Two theories guided this study the critical race theory (CRT) and culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP). Derrick Bell (1995) created the CRT to theorize how race impacts contemporary society. The CRT benefits the study by understanding African American male teachers' challenges and benefits in the early childhood classroom. While all teachers, regardless of race, can be qualified to teach students of color, people of color teachers can be more skilled at engaging and motivating those students (Milner, 2017).

The conceptual framework for the study, culturally responsive teachers, was based on Gloria Ladson-Billing's (1998) theory of CRP. The theory addresses how culturally relevant teaching empowers students to learn. Ladson-Billing's work has been used extensively in the K–12 setting, addressing the need for diversity of educators in the classroom. It addressed the teacher as the person delivering instruction based on their cultural background.

### **Significance of the Study**

The value of conducting a study in this regard is unique. African American male teachers in America are statistically rare. Teachers in the United States are disproportionately female (75%) and White (83%) for the nation's public schools that are not made up of a majority of minority students (Brown, 2017). African American males make up less than 2% of the teaching workforce. Still, they are critical to the success of people of color students for countless reasons (Brown, 2017; Bryan, 2018). The study guides the educational practice from the early childhood Black male teacher's often invisible and muted vantage point. Furthermore, as more research is conducted on the early childhood Black male teacher, it adds to the national scholarly discussion; it moves from debate to practice, emphasizing policies and procedures. It is a mechanism for

change in bringing social justice to people of color students, especially Black boys, to close the achievement gap.

Results from this study will have theoretical significance for researchers in higher education, leaders of school systems, and other educational stakeholders. Utilizing Bell's (1995) CRT, this research will attempt to discover patterns and themes among the symbolic status of teachers as men of color and the professional experiences of African American male educators. Bryant et al. (2017) examined Black males in the classroom, and the CRT guided the study. The researchers found that White females are overrepresented in the K–12 classroom, while Black male teachers are underrepresented in the K–12 classroom. Goings and Bianco (2016) utilized the CRT as a framework to explore Black males' perspectives on why they chose the teaching profession. To date, minimal studies have employed the lens of African American males' presence in the early childhood classroom.

CRP theory was essential to this study because it demonstrates how African American male teachers in the classroom develop relationships through culturally relevant discourse (Brown, 2017; Bryan, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In a study on cultural response discourse, an African American male teacher in a Midwestern high school participated in a classroom discourse analysis study (Thomas & Warren, 2017). The African American male teacher stated how learning discourse analysis structured more productive conversations with the student he mentored throughout the semester. As he became a teacher-researcher, he reported a greater sense of professional self-efficacy. In this study, the African American male teacher demonstrated an exemplar case of the unique and critical role of African American men who teach.

Redding (2019) suggested that students benefit from interacting with resources to see themselves and readily identify. Similarly, these conversation will begin a dialogue regarding working conditions for this group of educators and positively facilitate platforms to tackle the dilemma of other employees. The goal would be for all teachers, gender, ethnicity, and other traits to thrive in a school system where they feel appreciated and acknowledged. Responses from participants, data analysis, and recommendations will inform how the tenets of these philosophical frameworks affect their encounters and provide consequent implications for policy at the school district levels.

The predominance of empirical research on Black male teachers is qualitative and focuses on prospective and in-service Black male teachers with various educational stakeholders (Baldrige, 2017; Berlowitz et al., 2017). Additional studies have explored the shortage and challenges in recruiting Black male teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Existing literature highlights several benefits of African American males in higher education (Goings & Bianco, 2016). Borowitz et al. (2017) suggested these educators are routinely situated as the remedy for enhancing the educational crises of African American boys and other minorities. The current investigation endeavored to change from these themes in ascribing meaning to the perception of Black males in the early childhood classroom and the benefits and challenges they face as implications that school districts can establish to affect this group of educators' encounters with colleagues and the community. Participants informed the missing area of the research how school systems should address these matters due to influencing practices and interactions with community stakeholders.

School districts are in charge of increasing the achievement of subgroups, including Black students who still lag being their White peers (Kleen & Glock, 2018). It takes a deliberate

approach to minimize the gap. This study provides school leaders with perspectives of people educators who could cultivate a school culture that embraces all children. School leaders say children of color must have role models with diverse teaching perspectives (Kleen & Glock, 2018). Brown (2017) discovered African American male teachers felt they were a factor in improving African American students' academic performance. They could assist in increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the achievement gap. The data gathered will speak to the unique perceptions of Black male teachers as attributed to their race and gender in the classroom. This study will continue to contribute to the CRT and CRP development by exploring African American males' factors due to their race. Additionally, the diversity of the teaching workforce will mirror the demographics of the students served.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

#### **Central Research Question**

What challenges do African American male early childhood teachers encounter in the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom?

**This central research question grounded the study. The answers to this question allowed the researcher to hear the participants' voices while advancing knowledge to improve practice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The central phenomenon (challenges) was broad, and sub-questions were asked to understand better the challenges African American male teachers face in the early childhood classroom.**

#### **Sub Question One**

What racial challenges do African American male teachers encounter in the early childhood classroom?

Gist (2017) proposed that Black educators face obstacles in creating professional, autonomous spaces that value the expertise they bring to the teaching profession. Several challenges may also relate to race and racism (Bell, 1995) and their emblematic status as men of color (Pabon, 2016). Many Black male educators faced subtle micro aggression, slights, and insults, which are racial challenges they regularly experience (Warren, 2020).

### **Sub Question Two**

What cultural challenges do African American male teachers encounter in the early childhood classroom?

Black educators are viewed as classroom managers and not delivering effective instructional practice (Pabon, 2016). They are often considered the saviors of disenfranchised people of color populations (Will, 2019). Bristol (2018) mentioned that Black educators feel they must relinquish their identity to conform to expectations of a majority White teaching population.

### **Sub Question Three**

What socioeconomic challenges do African American male teachers encounter in the early childhood classroom?

Many Black male educators face financial stressors due to being in the profession; many Black males enter a field where they are fairly compensated (Wood et al., 2017). They are also faced with the challenges of providing their students with the real-world experiences that they will face due to their culture; they are apprehensive about doing this due to the political climate (de Royston et al., 2020). Also, they are not given adequate opportunities to grow as their White counterparts (de Royston et al., 2020).



### **Definitions**

1. *African American Male teacher/Black Male Teacher* – a person of Black African descent born in the United States of America (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. *Challenge* – Being faced with different situations, something that need mental and physical effort (Bristol, 2018).
4. *Critical Race Theory (CRT)* – a theory that seeks a vital examination of society and culture and how they intersect with law, race, and power (Ladson-Billings, 1998).
5. *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Theory (CRP)* – a theory that includes students’ cultural references in all aspects of learning (Kohli, 2018).
6. *Early Childhood* – the ages birth to eight years old and in pre-kindergarten through third grade (Bristol, 2018).

### **Summary**

The problem was that African American males’ voices, experiences, and pedagogies are left out of the foundation of teacher education, specifically early childhood. The purpose of this multi-case study was to understand the perceptions of African American male teachers on the benefits and challenges of teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom. The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) has predicted the influx of people of color students in the country’s public schools will continue to expand one to two percentage points annually through 2026. However, those who teach these students remain mostly White females, with Black males consisting of 2% of the workforce. The qualitative multi-case study

findings provided all stakeholders with a better understanding of the lack of African American males in education.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this multi-case study was to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom. More specifically, the goal was to hear their challenges and help educators recruit and retain African American male teachers in early childhood classrooms. The ensuing findings will thereby fill the gap in the empirical data. The CRT (Bell, 1995) and CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1998) will be discussed to provide a theoretical framework for the ensuing findings and recommendations. The following section reviews the current literature relevant to the topic of investigation. Pertinent research will explore cultural factors, CRT in education, early childhood education, men in early childhood education, African American teachers, and African American male teachers in the K–12 setting, culturally relevant teaching, and interactions with students. The summary addresses what is known about this topic in the current research and identifies a gap in the literature regarding Black male educators in the early childhood setting.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundation of this chapter is built upon CRT and CRP. The CRT will inform the study by exposing the stereotypes existing for African American males in education. CRT portrays the societal inequalities for a group or demographic through a socially conscious lens. The basis for inequalities can be race, socioeconomic, gender, and religion (Creswell, 2013). CRP will be significant to this study because it will demonstrate how African American teachers in the classroom can sustain relationships through culturally relevant dialogue.

### **CRT**

Derrick Bell (1995) and his colleagues developed the CRT. During the 1950s, CRT manifested through legal scholars' activity in further examining the subsistence of racism in America and the lack of racial reform embedded in civil rights legislation. CRT was introduced on the criticism of the critical legal studies movement that examined the traditional underpinnings of the legal system at that time (Tafari, 2018). Critical legal studies was void of introducing race and racism in their defense of eliminating the oppressive social structure that was present. CRT was the outcome of frustration and discontentment from legal scholars of color.

Bell (1995) and his colleagues formulated CRT as they looked to clarify how the oppressive means of White supremacy towards individuals of color continued to maintain its grasp on society (Tafari, 2018). Bell maintained that this interpretive framework is ideologically committed to the struggle of racism, institutionally and by law. The theory was also developed as a counter-legal scholarship to civil rights' positivist and liberal legal discourse (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Through the CRT lens, communities of color nurture cultural wealth through at least six forms of capital: navigational, aspirational social, linguistic, resistant, and familial (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Yosso, 2005). Navigational capital refers to students' skills and abilities to navigate "social institutions," including educational spaces (Yosso, 2005, p. 89). Students' navigational capital empowers them to maneuver within unsupportive or hostile environments. Aspirational capital is defined by Yosso as the "hopes and dreams" students have (p. 90). She explained that African Americans and students and their families have high educational aspirations despite persistent education inequities. Social capital is a form of capital students' "peers and other social contacts" emphasize how students utilize to gain college access and

navigate other social institutions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 25). Linguistic capital refers to students' various language and communication skills in their college environment (Yosso, 2005). This form of capital discusses storytelling's role, particularly for students of color.

Resistance capital has its foundations in the experiences of communities of color in securing equal rights and collective freedom. Familial capital refers to students' social and personal human resources in their pre-college environment, drawn from their extended familial and community networks (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

CRT as a theoretical framework comprises the following five tenets: counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, interest convergence, and the critique of liberalism (Ducan, 2019). The use of counter-stories provides faculty, staff, and students of color a voice to tell their narratives involving marginalized experiences (Sun, 2018). Racism's persistence shows that it controls the political, social, and economic spheres. Racism is considered an integral element of American civilization in CRT, with Whites being given preference over people of color in almost every aspect of life, including education (Tate, 1995). Because of pervasive racism in American society, Whiteness might be viewed as a property right (Sun, 2018). As a result, this concept is applied to multiple facets of life. The right of possession, use and enjoyment, the right of disposition, and the right of exclusion are among them (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). Early civil rights legislation offered only basic rights to African Americans, which White citizens had enjoyed for centuries (Brooms, 2020).

Ladson-Billings (1998) also contended that this theory reveals that whites have been civil rights legislation's primary beneficiaries. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first introduced this concept to education to address racial disparities in the education system. The authors argued that the cause of African American poverty in conjunction with their schools and schooling was

structural and institutional racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). CRT strives to attain racial equilibrium, social emancipation of people of color groups, and practices that will allow all persons to achieve their fullest potential based on equal opportunities (Brooms, 2020). Delgado and Stefancic (1998) illustrated the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* 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).

Bell's (1995) 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 outcome for minorities in this country is often complemented with tantamount measures for those in power (Bell, 1995). 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 drives educators closer to an equitable status for all groups of persons (Bell, 1995; Sun, 2018). The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) has reported that the nation's students are becoming increasingly diverse, yet the teaching workforce remains predominantly Caucasian and female. The CRT provides a theoretical framework to initiate discussions with male teachers of color regarding their challenges in the early childhood classroom.

### **CRP**

CRP addressed how culturally relevant teachers empower students to learn, and it also discussed the teacher who delivers instruction based on their cultural background. Ladson-Billings' (1998) work has been used broadly in K–12 education to address the need for diversity of educators in the school system. Ladson-Billings and Tate's (2016) conceptualization of

sociopolitical consciousness, a belief of CRP, supported the classroom context and instructional practices to help her students see their lives as meaningful.

CRP theory was essential to this study because it plays a role in countering the deficit narratives tied to historically marginalized students of color. Teachers enacting CRP utilize student culture as a valuable tool for learning instead of positioning culture as an explanation for student failure. African American children and marginalized groups receive a sub-par education (Brown, 2017). Thus, the need exists for important voices and perspectives that hold minorities accountable for addressing the problem (Brown, 2017). American researchers and authors view the need for diversity in the classroom based on research, personal experiences, and case studies (Thomas & Warren, 2017).

Boyce and Chouinard (2017) presented research on teacher education regarding race and diversity. The researchers maintain that schools with racially diverse teachers have shown results in closing the achievement gap between subgroups of students based on state assessments. America is becoming more ethnically diverse, yet K-12 classrooms continue to be led predominantly by White teachers, mainly females (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The approach provides one way to address the academic success of African Americans and other children under-served by public schools through culturally relevant teaching.

The theorist of CRP examines significant areas for ultimately understanding the importance of African American males in the classroom related to cultural synchronization and school connectedness (Irvine, 2003; Lemberger & Clemens, 2012). A study that investigated the concept of cultural synchronization was conducted on the perceptions of African American teachers' classroom management practices with minority students (Sun, 2018). The findings

suggested that cultural synchronization between the teacher and her students contributed to an effective style of classroom management that differs from traditional classroom practices.

### **Related Literature**

Existing along a historical continuum in the United States, Black males have been considered misunderstood, maladjusted, and devalued (Rosen, 2017). A growing body of research examines African American males in the teaching profession, yet fewer studies have documented early childhood teachers' experiences. The prevalence of such investigations explores the scarcity of men of color in education, endeavoring to explain this scarcity and practical measures for making the vocation more appealing to a more overall breadth of professional men (Milner, 2017). Numerous researchers have grappled with socioeconomic inequities that are arguably applicable not just to Black men but more broadly to marginalized and people of color populations (Ducan, 2019).

### **Cultural Factors**

Schools are becoming more diverse, and teachers must have the ability to reach all students from a cultural aspect (Christ & Sharma, 2018). Teachers must alter their methods of instruction and acquaint themselves with the culture of their served population if they wish to impact them educationally. Cultural diversity is an ongoing matter in the school and classroom environment, which significantly impacts the environment, level of student engagement, and dealings amongst the school and community (Rosen, 2017). Christ and Sharma (2018) indicated that the dominant culture had been formulated focusing on the customs of mostly White Protestants.

The dominant culture epitomizes more than the targeted group, which results in many educators being unable to handle diverse student populations (Knight-Manuel & Marciano,



2018). Culture is composed of many factors such as how one interacts, perceptions of the environment, and the associated dialect of their environment. Teachers and students have their value and belief system, which in turn has an impact on the learning environment. The lack of cultural awareness from the teacher often fuels the disconnect with students, which in turn results in poor classroom management. The lack of a cultural relationship is a student disconnect (Christ & Sharma, 2018).

Henry and Redding (2018) noted culture directly affects the classroom environment. Their research focused on the tremendous impact of incorporating teacher infusion of culturally based classroom management on the classroom environment. Their study took place in a large, urban, southeastern United States city. The student population consisted of 420 Black students, 222 White students, and eight Hispanic students. Fifty-four percent of the students received free and reduced school lunch due to economic need. The participants consisted of one eighth-grade science teacher with 22 students: 12 Black boys, nine Black girls, and one White girl. The African American teacher experience consisted of 10 years. The research data was compiled of interviews with the teacher and classroom observations. The final data analysis indicated that the teacher could interact appropriately with students labeled disruptive by school conduct guidelines. When issues arose, the teacher communicated with the students, which positively altered the students. The teacher emphasized the importance of academic excellence and employed it to foster a positive classroom climate. Findings highlighted the importance of cultural awareness and flow and the effect on classroom management and discipline practices.

### **CRT in Education**

It is strongly encouraged that educators question pedagogy, curriculum, teaching, and learning using a CRT lens to change the educational sector (Milner, 2017). When education is

examined through with this lens, it is evident that the educational sector is strongly built off White supremacy (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Ladson-Billings (1998) suggested the CRT school curriculum is purposefully crafted to preserve a White supremacist master product. From the educational perspective, CRT is composed of six major foundational beliefs: racial disparities and inequalities are the product of a system of accomplishment founded on competition, the dissection and examination of how educational policies are based on racial inequality and eternalize white norms, denial of the novelties of white superiority and the lower rank of people of color, recognition of the design of racial oppression and coexisting educational practices, dissect how race falls into line with various distinguishable characteristics such as gender, sexuality, class, citizenship status, linguistic background, and advocacy for relevant outcomes that remedy racial disparity, as defying to just simply documenting the concern (Dixson & Rousseau-Anderson, 2018).

Baker-Bell (2017) discussed the need for educators to investigate their attitudes in the classroom setting. Baker-Bell (2017) indicated that many of their viewpoints and perspectives imitate the overarching system and outlook of White supremacy, making it difficult for them to provide instructional techniques that are culturally relevant, which ultimately results in inequities in the classroom.. Baker-Bell relayed that CRT in the K–12 education sector consists of several topics: (a) curriculum and pedagogy, (b) teaching and learning, (c) schooling, and (d) policy, finance, and community engagement.

In an ideal world, equal opportunities in education would be provided towards students from marginalized or economically disadvantaged groups of color would be provided the same opportunities such as instruction, curriculum, facilities, and funding as White students (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The commonness of race and racism is embedded throughout the K–12

curriculum. CRT provides educators with the needed materials and knowledge to address these prevalent issues in teaching and learning, curriculum and pedagogy, policy, schooling, community engagement, and school finance (Pyke, 2018). Despite this, CRT is complicated for many educators to employ in the classroom. There is a necessary duty to bring together theory and practice using culturally responsive classroom management, which should be required for preservice teachers to learn while in their teacher education programs.

Despite many historical endeavors to equalize the educational experiences and environments of students of color, there has been limited or questionable effectiveness (Bryant et al., 2017). Students members of groups based on race, sexuality, social and economic factors have been exposed to more adverse experiences in the educational system than their White, middle to upper income, hetero, cis-gendered male students (Dixson & Rousseau-Anderson, 2018). Many of these students of color are discovered more in special education programs, are under-represented in academically gifted programs, are subject to lack of basic resources, and have high dropout rates stemming from low academic outcomes (Baines & Long, 2018). Bryant et al. (2017) noted that this harms society by excluding these students' generational talents in the classroom. Bryant also indicated that the nation is hindering its progress by not providing these students equal opportunities to excel in school settings, thereby prohibiting them from bringing their many talents into society.

While in the school setting, educators can implement CRT to create a safe space for students to maximize their learning potential. Students, in turn, will create a learning environment that is engaging and experiential; however, this is a huge task for educators and leaders in general. Baines and Long (2018) noted challenges educators face in implementing CRT, and encouraged educators and leaders to seek out opportunities for personal growth when

faced with the perils that accompany social justice activism. Bean-Folkes and Ellison (2018) suggested that social justice activism should be "a joint responsibility that is shared by administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community" (p. 3).

School culture and climate are currently influenced by public policy, community engagement, and school finance. Due to this, it is unfortunate that school finance and public policy negatively affect and impact marginalized communities (Sanders et al., 2018). McIntosh and Curry (2020) suggested educators implement CRT to "expose, highlight, and challenge" these differences (p.85). Ladson-Billings (1998) indicated the aspects of education CRT highlights, such as policies and school finance, are the direct result of institutionalized racism. The negative impact of this is highly detrimental to marginalized students who are subjected to this racism. Additionally, CRT highlights the importance of reforming policies and funding mechanisms for racial progress. The inequalities will continue to proceed without awareness and the subsequent altering of White supremacy and privilege. Without this, the status quo will continue (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Phillip, 2018).

Phillip (2018) indicated that critical race scholarship has been instrumental in exposing the work of advocates for educational access and opportunities for marginalized students. This scholarship is built on the premise that race and racism are essential. The author details the general nature of White supremacy and how it continues to shape the culture and policies present on many college and university campuses (Phillip,2018). These views are also rooted in the appearance of colorblindness which indicates that viewing skin color is racist (Bradshaw et al., 2018; Phillip,2018). However, the implementation of colorblindness promotes white supremacy, consequential privileges, and ongoing discrimination against students of color. The denial of this

White supremacist system blames students of color for shortcomings in education (Bradshaw et al., 2018).

### **Early Childhood Education**

The National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC] (2018) defines early childhood education as teaching children from birth to age eight. Traditionally, this is equivalent to up to third grade in the school system. During this period, the child experiences the most rapid phase of growth and development (Bristol, 2018). Their brain develops rapidly during this part of their lives. The foundation for their social, cognitive, language, perception of the world, and moral outlook are formed in these years.

According to Bryan and Browder (2015), the voices of African American male teachers within early childhood can be attributed to several factors:

- There are not many men in the field of education.
- Less than 20% of teachers in the United States are male and that this percentage decreases in early childhood education.
- Studies are scarce concerning the experiences of male teachers, particularly Black male teachers.
- The voices and influence of male teachers who work with young children have been overlooked, understudied, and trivialized in educational theory and research (p. 145).

The thought of having men as early childhood teachers is due to the constituency of early childhood educators and practitioners who prefer teaching and early childhood as a women's job (Souto-Manning, 2019). The ideas and trends need to be further studied, considering the potential benefits of having African American males in early childhood. Researchers have outlined numerous reasons why more male teachers are needed in early childhood (). In

particular, African American male teachers can alter the dismal trends in education associated with African American students that are low achievement, poor test scores, and dropping out (Souto-Manning, 2019).

The presence of more males in the early years can affect the profession, society, and children. More Black male teachers in early childhood can help disassemble the hegemonic forces that reduce occupational choices for men and women (Souto-Manning, 2019); it can drastically affect society's views of gender-specific occupations. This complex dynamic could positively impact paradigm shifts, in theory, policy, and research. Additionally, more occupational choices occur for men when dominant ideologies of gender and occupations decline (Sherrod, 2018).

The education field could increase the number of male teachers in the early childhood setting by bringing in viewpoints and new opportunities in the field. According to Barnard et al. (2000), effective male educators serve as role models to boys and girls. Furthermore, their presence can have a constructive impact on improving academics and behavior expectations of boys, and their presence also similarly has benefits for girls. Therefore, having Black male teachers in early childhood, boys and girls could learn to leave behind socially constructed ideas of gender-specific occupations.

### **Men in Early Childhood Education**

Male teachers are scarce in early childhood classrooms (Sherrod, 2018). For example, in the United States, fewer than 3% of early childhood teachers are male. The paucity of male teachers has been linked to a range of issues such as urbanization, the position of women in society, gender stereotypes, and economic development (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019; Sherrod, 2018). Duggan (2021) suggested students need a diverse group of educators to

accumulate the memories connected with the formation of identities. Gender diversity in educators, like racial and cultural diversity, can contribute to this process. Male teachers in early childhood reflect how men negotiate masculinities in a predominantly feminine arena (Zhang et al., 2017). No matter the race, all men become targets for delegitimizing and suspicion (Tafari, 2018). For instance, males in early childhood are at risk of being labeled a pedophile, potentially violent, and assumed homosexuals. (Zhang et al., 2017). The suspicious discourse alienates men from becoming early childhood teachers.

It is necessary to recognize the discourse of suspicion and analyze strategies for decreasing the interplay of factors that lead to the discourse to create a diverse teacher population in early childhood. Tafari's (2018) research found some parents were nervous about leaving their child in the hand of a male teacher, and parents felt male teachers could not nurture emotional development and may take advantage of the child. Jackson and Knight-Manuel (2019) noted some young children do not have their emotional needs met at home. In particular, children from fatherless homes may look up to a male teacher as masculine role models or father figures.

According to Duggan (2021), several parents expressed confidence in male teachers. Unlike female teachers, parents believe men represent strong authority figures that can effectively deal with behavior issues and enforce discipline in the classroom. Reich-Shapiro et al. (2021) analyzed levels of self-efficacy among male and female early childhood teachers. Differences between men and women on overall self-efficacy were evident in classroom management. However, there were no substantial differences between men's and women's self-efficacy concerning instructional strategies or student engagement (Reich-Shapiro et al., 2021). The inclusion of male early childhood teachers improves the quality of education by contributing to children's social adaptation.

### **African American Teachers**

As racism has had a continuous presence throughout the history of America, African American educators have used schooling as a platform to work against racism, altering their strategies to the different ways racism has presented itself throughout various periods in American history (Bryant et al., 2017). History has established achieving equality across racial obstacles is challenging. It seems impossible to birth a culture that is anti-discriminatory and colorblind. It is quite easy to perceive discrimination and oppression throughout society (Payne et al., 2017). The flow of discrimination and oppression causes racial discrepancies for Black people, making the nation more indignant (Payne et al., 2017). Some of the noted discrepancies for Black Americans are a rise in crime and incarceration rates and greater public assistance programs (Duncan, 2019).

The concept of Black teachers' services as role models for Black students, along with a historical continuum, dates to the civil rights movements (Bryan & Jett, 2018). Because Black teachers were considered inferior, they were not authorized to teach White students and were relegated to teaching in schools specifically for Black students (Rosen, 2017). Furthermore, being a teacher has long been an extremely well-respected role in many Black communities. However, this outlook has diminished in some segments of Black life in America (Milner, 2017). While teachers in general play a critical role in the lives of their students, it is argued that Black teachers play a vital role, particularly for Black students (Rosen, 2017). The concept of ethnic matching is because of the commonly held notion that many Black students are missing parents in their lives. Matching teachers and students by ethnicity is not a guaranteed strategy for achieving academic success (Duncan, 2019).



Research has highlighted views concerning African American students' achievement when they are taught by African American teachers (Ducan, 2019). The belief is that Black students will learn more when taught by a Black teacher because they can develop a cultural understanding of each other. In addition, Ferguson (2003) stated "all children learn more when their home and school environment is matched, and the same race educators can provide Black students with cultural congruence between the home and school" (p. 345). The primary reason that this belief has gained power in literature is that Black teachers have higher expectations for interacting positively with Black students than teachers, thereby increasing the self-esteem and motivation Black students need to take on challenging, rigorous coursework ( Ferguson,2003). In addition, Black educators believe that there is more to educating the Black student than substantive knowledge. Black educators teach about life the importance of education and success (Warren, 2017). Black educators possess institutional knowledge that can be particularly valuable for Black students making their way through a White-dominated society (Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). Black teachers have been highly skilled in communicating with Black students about personal value, collective power, and political consequences of choosing academic achievement over failure (Warren, 2017). The communicative exchanges have empowered many Black students in the uplift of their education.

### ***Role Models***

The proportion of Black instructors employed and the number of Black kids enrolled in American schools are significantly different (Warren, 2017). Thus, teacher training programs must take the initiative to find and train Black teachers for positions teaching in early childhood settings. According to several theorists (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Mitchell, 1998; & Leonard, 2008), people of color teachers are exceptionally skilled at inspiring and enthusing people of

color students because they frequently bring knowledge of the students' backgrounds to the classroom that improves students' educational experiences, even though all teachers, regardless of race, can be trained to be effective teachers of Black students (Young & Young, 2020). Students must have exposure to male teachers of color beginning in early childhood (Vickery, 2017). Some Black students may not have many positive male role models at home (Warren, 2017; Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). Allen (2019) mentioned how critical it is for principals to hire additional male teachers because boys must have contact with male role models. Due to factors out of their control, some students might only see successful Black males in the school setting (Brown, 2019).

Using a qualitative research design, Jones (2021) emphasized the flaws in the assumptions that only Black teachers are the most suitable role models for Black students and that Black students will readily accept Black teachers as role models. Jones conducted focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews with 58 Black teachers of different grades: ten female and 48 male educators. The study's findings demonstrated ethnicity was not the deciding factor in being accepted as a role model, especially for Black male teachers. Key findings from Jones's study indicated socio-economic status could be a troubling factor in creating positive relationships between Black students, Black male teachers, and Black teachers.

In addition, the study uncovered that some of the teacher participants did not consider themselves teachers strictly for Black students; instead, they saw being a role model as a by-product of simply being a teacher (Jones, 2021). However, as Bristol and Goings (2018) discuss, the dialogue concerning ethnic matching about student-teacher relationships must consider the differences between role modeling and mentoring. Bristol and Goings define a mentor as a skilled helper or role model, providing the mentee with the necessary knowledge and skills

needed for successful living. In contrast, Bryan (2018) argued that Black and other teachers of color play a significant role in the achievement and social outcomes of students of color.

### ***Cultural Knowledge***

Much of the research concerning African American teachers argued that Black teachers share cultural knowledge and practices that permit them to connect with Black students and be effective in school and life (Tafari, 2018). African American teachers that establish their awareness of their students' experiences can use this understanding in the classroom to design instruction and alter it accordingly. Wood et al. (2017) revealed many Black teachers were strict and demanding regarding classroom management and high student expectations. In this regard, teacher reprimands and respect for the teacher are necessary because they are identified as part of Black teachers creating a climate of success and care for their students.

D'Amico et al. (2017) found Black teachers bring a socio-political element to the practice of education. Within the confines of the school-building, politically minded Black teachers can aid in emphasizing and combating a hidden curriculum that serves the purpose of maintaining a Eurocentric educational model and rendering ethnic minorities (Margolis & Romero, 1998). Education is an ethnically gendered profession primarily dominated by White females; Black teachers can advocate for Black students who are often silenced. Within the more extensive societal framework, Black teachers often operate as agents of change by providing insight regarding structures and institutions that drastically impact people's lives, particularly Black students (Tafari, 2018).

### ***Expectancy***

Gershenson et al. (2015) conducted a study on teacher expectancy. The researchers found that White teachers expected less academic success from African American students than

African American teachers did from the same students. Furthermore, they discovered White educators were about 30 percent less likely to expect an African American student's future success in attending a college or university. In a similar study, Alemán and Gaytán (2017) found:

Twelve percent of non-minority and White teachers are more likely than Black teachers to expect Black students not to graduate high school, while five percent of White teachers are more likely to expect Black male students not to graduate high school. Twenty percent of African American female teachers are less likely than White teachers to be optimistic about the ability of African American male students to graduate high school. Ten to 20 percent of White male teachers are more likely to have low expectations for African American female students (p. 110).

Research on men and masculinities has examined the experiences of primarily White male teachers and found that society's expectations for men as strong and authoritative often collide with the image of primary teachers as nurturing and patient (Acosta et al., 2018). Acosta et al. (2018) argued, there is a growing interest in examining how "men who teach in the early grades make sense of the reactions of others in the workplace to their 'maleness,' the gendered division of labor in the workplace, and their perceptions of doing masculinity under a variety of circumstances" (p. 344). Due to socioeconomic and cultural differences, White teachers and people of color students may lack a rapport or bond. According to Kohli (2018), many White teachers tend to place lower expectations on African American students for two reasons. First, White teachers work from a "hegemonic, Western, epistemological framework" (Kohli, p. 209); second, they lack respect for the students' families and culture.

### **Black Male Teachers in the K—12 Setting**

Despite the diversity in K–12 schools that reflect the changing demographic of the country, most American teachers are White, which reflects a racial "mismatch" in many schools and classrooms (Bryant et al., 2017). The United States' K–12 educational system is molded towards White and female culture. Over 80% of K–12 public school teachers are White, with Black teachers representing 6.7% (Bryan et al., 2016). In addition, females represent over 75% of the teaching force. Due to this, K–12 education is heavily focused on the cultural practices of Whites and females (Bristol & Goings, 2018).

Males, primarily males of color, represent a small portion of the teaching force in K–12 education. Black male teachers are exposed to the normalized views of White and female teachers. Most K–12 schools retain a culture of biases and stereotypes that benefit the dominant White culture (Pitcan et al., 2018). This culture can be seen as a facilitator to dejection for Black males to enter and stay in the K–12 teaching profession.

Teacher education programs have historically taught White students (Griffen & Griffen, 2019). The challenge these educational programs face is how to provide teachers the skills necessary to instruct and develop positive relationships which will foster academic and social achievement (Kohli, 2018). Lynn (2006) provided research regarding how the experiences and practices of Black male teachers transfer into the classroom setting. The Black male teachers' exposure to street culture has been instrumental in their ability to relate to their students and the primary force needed behind change initiatives for their students and communities (Griffen, 2017).

Brown (2019) deemed Black male teachers' performance centered on them being viewed as an enforcer, negotiator, or playful in addressing the needs of their students, particularly Black male students. When the Black male teacher is viewed as the enforcer, he is a stern teacher who

demands respect and adherence to the rules set forth. The negotiator interacts around being one who urges students to perform at a high level who actively listens and provides feedback to increase their level of learning. The playful Black male teacher implores their personal experiences to secure bonds and display humor outside of the classroom setting within the building. Jackson and Knight-Manuel (2019) contended that Black male teachers' contributions to K–12 education have primarily been silent. Still, they are now receiving more visibility due to their ability to implement creative and ingenious strategies to meet the multi-faceted needs of their students (Brown, 2019).

Jackson and Knight-Manuel (2019) also described how Black male teachers implemented their social injustice experiences to positively impact their best educational practices to succeed for their students. The authors noted Black male teachers viewed themselves as agents of change due to their desire for social justice. Students of color benefit from those who look like them because of the reflected higher expectations. Jackson and Knight-Manuel concluded this expectation and representation to the people of color student population were essential in increasing these students' cultural value of academics. Brockenbrough (2015) examined the educational practices and sphere of life of Black male teachers. His research focused on the intricateness of the views of Black male teachers. He addressed the overarching narrative of Black males being seen as father figures, role models and the assumption that their Blackness leads to stronger student connectivity. Black male teachers were viewed as disciplinarians but tackle their identities in a female-dominated area. According to a 2017 study by Griffen and Carrier, Black male teachers are considered role models for their students, especially Black students. Moreover, they are often affiliated with the ability to relate to the students they interact with daily with their strong ability to adapt to the settings to meet the needs of their students.

Black male teachers are viewed as teachers who go above the traditional view of an educator and are often assigned to fixed spaces where they are viewed as the savior for people of color students (de Royston et al., 2020). When they successfully expand their roles as teachers, they enter the patriarchal realm, which allows them to reach their students more. Their actions help counteract the negative Black male stereotypes and identities often portrayed in the media (Lewis, 2006). Lewis (2006) found Black male teachers brought a teacher-centered classroom style often viewed as rigid. Their classrooms often focused on high standards, sincere concern for the well-being and success of their students, and teacher attentiveness. Bryan (2018) asserted Black male teachers' classrooms focused on exchanging ideas and being purposeful in developing critical and analytical thinking skills. Their ability to negotiate with their students allowed them not to be confrontational when displaying demanding expectations.

Black male teachers' ability to implement culture in the classroom is critical due to their ability to foster growth in all subjects (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). However, some Black male teachers view their roles as all-encompassing. They are overwhelmed with the duties sometimes blindly attached to being a Black male educator including surrogate father, disciplinarian, and administrator. The feelings of having all these additional roles sometimes devalue their academic impact (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Brockenbrough, 2015). Additionally, these educators have reported they are sometimes given the task of devising and implementing the remedy to all the problems that may impact students of color (Brown et al., 2018; Callender, 2018).

Brown (2019) emphasized some Black male teachers do not see themselves as compatible with their students. Some resist the assertion they must serve as father figures and role models for the students they serve. Brown also noted when Black male educators challenge these assumptions, they are allowed to be more effective educators by not having the pressures of

the inferiority of being race men. It should be assumed that not all Black men share identical gender, socioeconomic, or cultural experiences (Allen, 2019). They should be viewed as being the byproduct of their individual experiences (Rosen, 2018).

Black male teachers inform and fortify the K–12 terrain (Kohli, 2018). Rosen (2018) conducted two studies that found students' academic achievement rose when they shared the same characteristics as their teacher. Rosen also observed that teachers of differing backgrounds from their students are often mislabeled their students as disruptive or inattentive when they were unable to reach them. Black male teachers often enter the educational field working in areas of impoverished students. Black men have been viewed as the bridge to reach those impoverished children, especially those of color (Kohli, 2018).

Advocates of increasing Black male educator representation in the schools indicate underprivileged Black students need role models who look like them and affirm their feelings (Allen, 2019). Black male teachers are seen as having the ability to bridge the students' home life to school, which can be difficult due to social and normative factors. Black educators, specifically male educators, can assist students with viewing themselves as more than the outcast race, which is sometimes manifested in school (Kohli, 2018). Over twenty years ago, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009) initiated CRP to describe a form of teaching that calls for engaging learners whose experiences and cultures are traditionally omitted from mainstream settings. Based on her research of effective teachers of African American students, Ladson-Billings (2009) projected three goals on which these teachers' practices were grounded:

1. Teaching must yield academic success.
2. Teaching must help students develop positive cultural and ethnic identities while simultaneously aiding them to accomplish academically.



3. Teaching must support students' understanding, recognizing, and evaluating current social inequalities. Centering these goals in their practice, culturally relevant experts can inspire students intellectually, emotionally, politically, and socially.

Ladson-Billings (2009) described the pedagogical practices of effective teachers of African American students and consequently conceptualized CRP as an effective method for instruction. Hiring and retaining African American teachers in schools provides African American children with teachers with similar identities, backgrounds, and experiences. Furthermore, African American teachers in the classroom allow for student connectedness to their teachers based on their environmental experiences. People of color teachers often implement culturally responsive teaching (Milner, 2017). Culturally responsive teaching is a teaching approach in which the teacher uses information regarding their students' culture to make teaching more impactful (Allen, 2019).

Culturally responsive teaching comprises related parts interwoven between the school, student, and environment. The various components of culture are formed by meshing the individual beliefs, values, socio-economic factors, and environmental edifice (de Royston et al., 2020). Characteristics of culturally responsive teaching consist of the teacher implementing culturally responsive lessons that empower students. The teacher can put forth high academic and behavioral expectations due to weaving culture into the classroom environment (Ducan, 2019). The teacher can outline necessary cultural actions and viewpoints which affect teacher-student interactions. Culturally responsive teaching aims to develop a classroom environment that stimulates academic achievement amongst diverse learning groups (Ducan, 2019).

Bristol and Goings (2018) focused on strategies used in the classroom to motivate people of color children to learn. Ten retired African American teachers revealed their success in

reaching their students. The teachers understood the importance of connecting the school and home. The teachers shared the importance of cultural understanding and making concepts relevant. Similarly, Woodson and Bristol's (2020) study had 10 African American male middle school English and mathematics schoolteachers describe how CRP supported their students' learning and brought instruction to life in the class. The teachers in the study described the connection between student experiences and a better understanding of content. Drawing from CRP, the African American male teachers were able to bring cultural experiences to actuality.

To develop a classroom environment where culturally responsive teaching occurs, the teacher must establish and maintain awareness of the students' culture and infuse it into instructional strategies and lessons (Allen, 2019). To gain knowledge should consist of the student population's communication techniques, values, and learning styles. Effective culturally responsive teaching consists of the teacher acknowledging and valuing student abilities, and the teacher can project their beliefs through high expectations and accountability (Bristol & Goings, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching is rooted in four modes of practice: communication, caring, curriculum, and cultural, instructional activities (Moseley, 2018).

### **Culturally Relevant Teaching and the Black Male Teacher**

There is little written about African American males' contribution to the development of knowledge on cultural teaching. It is critical to look closely at Black men's pedagogical practice, especially the practices of Black male teachers that express a commitment to using their classroom as a tool to improve the social conditions of their Black students. Bell (1995) noted African American teachers could have similar cultural perspectives and similarities to their students. Students who may not be existent with teachers who are not African American; however, this does not guarantee their presence will be more effective than that of a teacher of

another race. Black male students are four times as likely to be labeled as learning disabled than White students (Moseley, 2018). This fact suggests a distorted relationship between the White female teacher and African American male students. The teachers do not have common ground with the students; it is easier for them to build barriers, treat them as having disabilities, ignore them, or allow others to deal with them. African American male teachers have made meaningful contributions to the effective teaching of Black and other children of color. Lewis (2006) noted:

The scholarship on Black teachers has expanded notions about what constitutes a sound healthy pedagogical practice. Moreover, these studies remind us that one's ethnic and racial identity can be a driving force for developing the commitment to improve the lives of African American youth in urban schools. (p. 249)

Culturally relevant teachers can center Black cultural knowledge as a part of official school knowledge and draw from it to support the academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical awareness of Black students. Culturally relevant Black male teachers in early childhood education could be one way to offset some of the dismal structural and institutional factors, which harmfully affect the schooling skills of Black males in the early childhood classroom (Moseley, 2018). Brown et al.'s (2018) case study of an eighth-grade class of 22 Black students and 1 White student with a Black teacher found that the cultural synchronization between students and teacher affected student discipline. Their findings indicated that Black teachers who drew on the cultural mannerisms, speaking tones, body language, and nonverbal communication practices of Black students successfully reduced disciplinary incidents among their students. The authors found actions such as feelings, humor, and emotions were effective ways to keep Black students on task and diminish inappropriate behavior. Knowing how to relate

and interpret behaviors that are culturally specific to African Americans enables Black teachers to assist Black students in navigating the daily trials of K–12 education.

Studies on the positive impact people of color teachers have on Black children have revealed significant findings. Culturally, when minorities can relate to the teacher based on relevant knowledge, they feel more confident and willing to take a risk (Pabon, 2016; Rosen, 2018; de Royston et al., 2020; Tafari, 2018). Children who take risks are more apt to develop confidence in themselves. Cultural identity tends to have an emotional benefit to people of color children from high-poverty neighborhoods, from knowing and being known and recognized by successful people who look like them. Furthermore, students thrive when they have access to demographically similar teachers (Aleman & Gaytan, 2016; Boutte, 2015; Pabon, 2016).

### **Black Male Teachers' Interactions with Students**

Several researchers highlighted the complex and nuanced workings of capital, both cultural and social (Ingersoll et al., 2019; Petchaur et al., 2018). Cultural capital speaks to experience, exposure, knowledge, and educational advantages over others who have not acquired had transmitted to or had it handed down to them (Boyce & Chouinard, 2017). In the K–12 setting, this means Black students can have the power to have many of their viewpoints, voices, and worldviews affirmed by Black educators who may be able to relate and share everyday experiences and stories. The lack of Black male teachers is value-laden because male students of color typically do not see a successful representation of men who look like them daily in schools (Bristol & Goings, 2018). This lack of teacher representation creates a self-fulfilling prophecy in which students of color might not view teaching as a career choice. If teachers want to educate Black males and increase their academic achievement, they must believe in Black male students

(Warren, 2020). Petchaur et al. (2018) noted teachers must connect students' lives and communities into the learning process.

An effective teacher of any racial background is preferable for Black male students than an ineffective African American teacher (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). However, having stated this, Black male teachers perhaps have several essential advantages in educating Black boys. These advantages include, for example, modeling appropriate behavior, strategic use of shared knowledge, and in some cases, everyday social experiences. The rapport that Black male teachers establish with Black male students through their shared cultural heritage can be maintained in the face of social class differences (Thomas, 2020). Therefore, in addition to raising the school's overall quality through comprehensive reform, the value-added dimension of being exposed to effective Black male teachers might increase the success rates of Black male students.

When an African American man decides to teach, his presence in the classroom is admirable, yet the conditions under which he teaches are often risky and troubling (Thomas, 2020). Bristol (2018) offered the most comprehensive and up-to-date depiction of the benefits and threats to Black male teachers in U.S. schools. Black male educators contribute significantly to Black students' sense of cultural pride, sociopolitical awareness, confidence, and connectedness to learning and the school environment. Ducan (2019) research concluding African American males would perform better under the tutelage of an African American male due to teacher-student cultural synchronization. Based on the study's findings, African American male teachers felt they were a factor in improving the academic performance of African American male students. They could assist in increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the achievement gap. Ducan noted the participants' beliefs suggesting the educational field should

improve efforts in hiring and retaining African American males to teach this population of students and the positive effect it may have on the entire educational system of America. Black students having Black teachers allows them to feel welcomed and not downgraded in educational spaces (D'Amico et al., 2017).

Black students often feel like their White teachers do not understand them or like them. Perceptions and stereotypes of White teachers towards Black students often become a point of concern (Ducan, 2019). Studies commonly reveal cases whereby many White teachers carry out their pedagogy and behavior in schools with deficit thinking towards Black students (Bristol, 2018; D'Amico et al., 2017; Ducan, 2019). These behaviors negatively impact Black students and contribute to their marginality manifesting in situations. Black students feel they do not belong in educational spaces; demonstrate low self-efficacy; report disproportionately being given detentions, suspensions, and expulsions; experience disparities in being assigned to special education or tracking to lower classes; and not being considered for gifted and talented programs (D'Amico et al., 2017).

### **Recruitment of Black Male Teachers**

Teachers of color have been shown to reduce the achievement gap for students of color and White students (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Although teachers of color are being recruited at a higher rate, the demand is not met due to the inadequate supply of Black male teachers. Recruiting and retaining Black male teachers to classrooms across all levels has always been a long-standing task in education, and some scholars have studied why few Black males become teachers (Bryan et al., 2016). Thomas (2020) argued because few Black males graduate high school, they do not attend college to become teachers. Roughly 50% of Black males graduate high school (Andrews et al., 2019). 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, 1995; Carver-Thomas & Warren, 2017).

Several researchers emphasized the diminished supply of African American teachers is attributable to the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 (Will, 2019; Duncan, 2019; & Thomas, 2020). A mounting number of programs has been developed to address the need to recruit male teachers of color to increase the number working in the public schools in the U.S. (Andrews et al., 2019). Former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan noted putting African American males in the classroom as teachers was crucial to the American educational system (Will, 2019). K–12 school administrators are charged with recruiting and retaining teachers who represent the school's racial population. Many teachers of color were summarily dismissed and not allowed to work in integrated settings, some were relegated to positions in buildings with insufficient or inadequate resources, and yet a third group was allocated to work solely with Black students despite legislation suggesting otherwise (Andrews et al., 2019; López & Burciaga, 2014; Lutz, 2017). Recent research held several factors that influenced the decisions of Black males to enter the classroom and the challenges of those who seek to enter the profession (Will, 2019).

D'Amico et al. (2017) found evidence that even as certified Black applicants applied to teach in the district, their chances of receiving an offer were considerably lower than White candidates, indicating discrimination in the teacher labor market. Andrews et al. (2019) argued that Blackness was negatively associated with receiving a job offer in their school district; when Black candidates were hired, schools with large populations of children of color or children in poverty, or Black principals offered those positions.

Research of more than 50 articles, websites, journals, interviews, and books has led to a collection of 10 strategies and practices found on multiple recommendations for increasing the placement of male teachers of color and attracting them to the profession. Carver-Thomas (2018) recommended partnering with local teacher preparation programs, historical Black colleges and universities, and other university teacher preparation programs with PK–12 school districts. These partnerships would require signed commitment letters before graduation and include minority teachers on the recruitment teams to create a diverse hiring team at recruitment job fairs (Bryan et al., 2016).

Gist (2017) proposed creating state programs that examine the hiring and retention of racial diversity of participants in teacher preparation programs. In addition, these programs would provide professional learning for male teachers of color to share and train other teachers on strategies used to support the growth and achievement of students of color. Bryan et al., (2016) contended that teacher education researchers should conduct more research to construct knowledge with Black male teachers to learn how their pedagogical performance styles can support Black males in early childhood education. Conducting more research with Black male teachers can support the move beyond deficit constructions of the Black male teacher. The research could support many educators to believe that Black male teachers can help improve the academic outcomes of Black boys, particularly in early childhood education (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

Black male teachers who demonstrate effective culturally relevant strategies can also create successful classroom relationships and communities with Black males. A national priority should be given to finding and preparing Black teachers to work with Black pupils in early childhood school districts. African American children continue to have disproportionately high



rates of high school dropout, and their college graduation rates are below the national average (Young & Young, 2020). It is crucial to diversify the teaching workforce so that all children can benefit from the enthusiasm and variety that educators from all backgrounds bring to the classroom (Ducan, 2019).

### **Summary**

In this study, the African American male teacher demonstrated an exemplar case of the unique and critical role of African American men who teach. The peculiar nature of Black individuals, specifically Black males, has left them the most socioeconomically disenfranchised, or outcast, compared to all other racial and gender subgroups. Students need to encounter African American teachers in the early childhood classroom to decrease the achievement gap. Ducan (2019) noted that African American students would perform better with an African American male teacher. African American male teachers face several challenges: racism, culture, and socioeconomic factors. However, more research is needed to understand how these issues compound when intersected with racism, cultural and socioeconomic impacts on African American male early childhood teachers

The target population of African American male pre-kindergarten and kindergarten early childhood teachers tends to be ignored by the literature; the focus typically resides on African American male high school or higher education male teachers (Goings & Bianco, 2016). This study allowed the research participants' voices to contribute to research regarding this educational phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The significance of this study was practical, theoretical, and empirical. Highlighting challenges affecting African American male educators benefits all stakeholders experiencing this phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018). Lastly, the

proposed research study could provide future policy and practice information by suggesting changes to reduce hegemony and discrimination in educational practice.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this multi-case study was to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom. Until recently, much of the research has mainly centered on African American teachers in general, with most attention afforded to females (Bryan & Jett, 2018). Yin (2009) summarized researchers should move to a multiple case study if different cases bring further information rather than merely replicating data. Yin's suggested research design aligned best with the present study due to the need for general understanding surrounding multiple cases; furthermore, the focus is not restricted to the case itself but the issues surrounding it (Stake, 1995). Chapter three explains the research study design, research questions, setting and participants, research positionality, researchers' role, procedures, data collection plan, and trustworthiness.

### **Research Design**

A qualitative methodology was employed to understand this phenomenon better. This methodology allowed the researcher to observe participants in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret the phenomena through their perspectives (Gall et al., 2007). Qualitative research uses detailed descriptions from the research participants' perspectives to examine specific issues and problems under investigation (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research was the optimal strategy for this study because it allowed for data collection in natural settings. Quantitative research seeks to measure attitudes, opinions, and behaviors into practical statistics that can apply to a large population (Gall et al., 2007). Furthermore, qualitative phenomenological research seeks applicable meanings understanding specific experiences from individuals who have lived through them (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). In other

words, qualitative research is appropriate when an experience needs to be further understood so it can be described (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Multi-Case Study Design**

For this study, a multi-case study design was used. An advantage of a multi-case study is that it is anchored in real life, and it allows an in-depth analysis of elements that justify present status and that impact change over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The problem is African American males' voices, experiences, and pedagogies are excluded from the foundation of teacher education, specifically for prospective early childhood educators. Twelve African American males who work in early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms were used as cases in the study, and the collective data was analyzed. According to Yin (2018), a case study is also appropriate when the research question focuses on a recent event, and the researcher does not need to control behavioral events.

A case study allows investigators to focus on a case and retain a holistic and real-world perspective, such as in studying small group behavior, individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, region change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries (Yin, 2014). For this study, a multi-case design was appropriate because multiple cases allowed for a more representative data set. Specifically, early childhood grades: pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, taught by African American males, were observed. This design was selected due to its ability to provide insight into the challenges African American male early childhood teachers' challenges face in the classroom. Although there are varying types including single-case holistic designs, single-case embedded designs, multiple-case holistic designs, and multiple-case embedded designs, case studies are chosen because the researcher is ultimately interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation (Yin, 2009). While all designs can

lead to effective case studies, Yin (2009) suggests that multiple-case designs are preferred over single-case designs when the opportunity allows.

Two significant researchers in the field of case study design are Robert Yin and Robert Stake. Although there are some similarities in their approaches, there are substantial differences in interpreting the research design. Both Stake and Yin grounded their approach to case study research through a constructivist paradigm (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Yin suggested four significant types of case studies: exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, and multiple cases (Yin, 2018). In contrast, Stake (1995) introduced intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case studies. Furthermore, multiple case studies focus on how and why the outcomes might have occurred and hope for literal replications of these conditions from case to case (Yin, 2018). Stake's collective case study emphasized the ongoing tension between the case and the issues, ultimately facilitating later cross-site analysis. This research design assisted in understanding the challenges African American males have in the early childhood classroom, as outlined with the research questions presented in this study.

## **Research Questions**

### **Central Research Question**

What challenges do African American male early childhood teachers encounter in the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom?

### **Sub Question One**

What racial challenges do African American male teachers encounter in the early childhood classroom?

### **Sub Question Two**

What cultural challenges do African American male teachers encounter in the early childhood classroom?

### **Sub Question Three**

What socioeconomic challenges do African American male teachers encounter in the early childhood classroom?

### **Setting and Participants**

Research took place in the southeastern region of the United States. North Carolina is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and four states: South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Virginia. One of the school districts is in the northeastern region of North Carolina, while the other is in the central region. Twelve Black male early childhood teachers participated in the case study.

### **Setting**

Two North Carolina school districts was selected as the main sites for this study. North Carolina's educational directory currently identifies 115 local education agencies. One school district selected for this study is in the northeastern region of North Carolina. It has 14 schools including seven elementary, two middle, and five high schools. At the executive level, the district's organizational structure consists of a superintendent who reports to a seven-member publicly elected school board, an assistant superintendent, and an instructional team of directors who supervise principals at the aforementioned levels. The other school district is in the central region of North Carolina. It has 171 schools including 104 elementary, 33 middle, 26 high, and four special/optional schools. At the executive level, the district's organizational structure consists of nine area superintendents who report to a nine-member publicly elected school board, six assistant superintendents, seven chief officers, and an instructional team of directors who

supervise principals at the previously mentioned levels. The researcher focuses on the elementary schools in both districts due to the target interview population of Black male early childhood teachers.

### **Participants**

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 used homogeneous purposeful sampling, selecting similar individuals who have likely shared the same phenomenon to provide information-rich data about their experiences (Patton, 2015). The group of teachers invited to participate was based on their status as Black male pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers and their availability due to being in the researcher's home and surrounding district. The sample helped address the research questions and furnish additional information regarding their experiences as Black male pre-kindergarten and kindergarten early childhood teachers. Participant information was obtained through the human resources department of both districts. Yin (2009) stated in a multiple-case design, the number of cases, or the sample size, should be determined by the number of case replications the researcher desires.

All participants were Black male teachers, traditionally certified, who teach at schools with diverse student populations in the southeastern region of North Carolina . Participants indicated the types of students they teach and school demographics on the teacher demographic questionnaire (Appendix F). Two or three cases do not provide the interaction necessary to highlight the phenomenon of interest 15 or 30 cases do (Stake, 1995). Twelve participants were chosen for this study through purposeful criterion sampling. Pseudonyms was assigned to all

participants to protect their identities. The participants was given a name that begin with the first letter in their name.

### **Researcher Positionality**

I am a pre-kindergarten teacher with seven years of teaching experience. I have a Bachelor of Science in Education in Birth–Kindergarten, a North Carolina Birth–Kindergarten teacher license, and a Master of Education in Early Childhood. I have taught pre-kindergarten and kindergarten grade levels in public and non-public schools. I am passionate about early childhood because it is the most critical time in a child's life, and the teachers they encounter will help mold them to be successful citizens in the future.

### **Interpretive Framework**

Creswell and Poth (2018) shared that researchers should identify their positionality about the research context and setting. The worldview that best aligns with this study is constructivism. Constructivism is an approach to qualitative research. Social constructivists believe that individuals seek to understand the world they live and work in (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The worldview relies on the research participants' views on the subject matter.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

Philosophical assumptions are critical for qualitative research. The ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions guided this research and helped develop the theories chosen for the study. As the researcher, I acknowledged the value-laden nature of the study and actively report my values and biases, as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

#### ***Ontological Assumption***



Ontological research allows a researcher to conduct a study to report these multiple realities, including using various forms of evidence in themes using the actual words of different individuals and presenting diverse perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Evidence of multiple realities includes using various forms of evidence in themes using different individuals' actual words and displaying their different views (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Different individuals embrace different experiences, so I reported multiple experiences and viewpoints.

### *Epistemological Assumption*

The philosophical assumption that is the groundwork for this study is an epistemology which is the study of an individual's method of developing knowledge (Creswell, 2013). This philosophy incorporates the nature of concepts, the construction of concepts, the validity of the senses, logical reasoning, thoughts, ideas, memories, emotions, and mental. Epistemological, philosophical assumptions compelled me to learn the challenges African American male educators face in the early childhood classroom.

### *Axiological Assumption*

Researchers bring values to a study, but qualitative researchers make their values known in a study, also known as the axiological assumption (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The axiological assumption explores the roles of importance in the research. From the philosophical perspective, the researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes the researcher's interpretation with participants' interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Working in the early childhood classroom and having a Black male principal showed me the impact Black males have in the school system. Observing a classroom years ago, the teacher was a young Black first-grade male teacher, and the respect the students had in the classroom showed me the effectiveness of a Black male teacher.

### **Researcher's Role**

As the study is qualitative, the researcher will serve as a human instrument, instead of the qualitative calibration of an instrument, of investigation. As a result, the researcher carries out data collection and becomes personally involved in the studied phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher, I understand personal biases due to being an African American early childhood teacher, and I have taught in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten early childhood classrooms. Also, I have encountered the many challenges that were explored in this study firsthand. I believe that African American male teachers are an essential factor in students' lives. Black male teachers can provide inspiration, hope, advice, and sometimes tough love that makes a difference in their students' lives.

One assumption brought to the study is that African American male teachers face more challenges than White male teachers. The sites chosen for this study were selected due to familiarity with the community and working in the North Carolina school system, and also being a member of NAEYC. One location is the school district I attended over a decade ago. This site may have some bearing on the biases that were brought to the study. I attended and have also worked in the school district. I will set aside any personal experiences, biases, or beliefs for the purposes of this study.

Gaining access to African American male early childhood teachers was not difficult because of the relationships with administrators, teachers, parents, and students in the community. The selection of the second site was based on my completion of an internship three years ago for my master's program. I selected a multi-case study research design so the participants' voices informed the study. The researcher wanted to help the educational world

understand the need for African American male teachers in early childhood and display the positive actions of employing people of color male teachers.

### **Procedures**

Copies of the approvals from the Institutional Review Board at Liberty University and the two school districts were emailed to the identified Black male teachers along with a recruitment letter (Appendix D). This information explained the purpose of the study; methodology; structure of the interview; sources of data including interviews, focus groups, and letter writing; their rights to withdraw at any point without penalty; and measures taken to ensure confidentiality. All participants were asked to reply within one week. As responses were received, the researcher and the participants determined times and locations to convene. With the participants' permission, interviews were recorded using Teams. After the interview, the focus group questions were designed to hear their thoughts about recurring themes and those in contrast. The researcher conducted a virtual focus group with the participants to obtain additional information about similar and contradictory responses from the teachers. Lastly, letter writing took place two weeks after the focus group, and the participants hand delivered or emailed the letter to the researcher.

### **Permissions**

A request to execute the mentioned investigation was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of Liberty University after the defense of the proposal (Appendix A). Next, a letter requesting site approval for the research study was presented to both superintendents (Appendix B). After receiving IRB approval, participants were selected for the study. Preliminary interviews with the selected students were conducted to determine suitable candidates (Appendix C). Interviews were conducted via Teams at the teachers' convenience. As

participants met the criteria for selection for data collection, each was assigned a pseudonym to keep their identities private. The study's data collection sources were one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and letter writing.

All participants were asked permission from the researcher to record the interviews and focus groups (Seidman, 2019). Interviews take much time as the researcher builds rapport, records information, and gives participants' experiences a voice (Seidman, 2019). The interviews and focus groups took place via Teams at specific times. The researcher was the facilitator and provided enough space for equipment such as video and audio recording or free-standing.

### **Recruitment Plan**

Two North Carolina school districts were selected as the main sites for this study, and North Carolina's educational directory currently identifies 115 local educational agencies. The two school districts chosen for this study are in the southeastern region of North Carolina, and the researcher focused solely on elementary schools. The prospective group of teachers initially invited to participate was based on their status as African American early childhood educators who teach pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. The participants in this multi-case study were selected through purposeful sampling. When the researcher uses purposeful sampling, the participants and sites chosen for this study were chosen purposefully to understand the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

It was assumed that the participants can provide an in-depth understanding of the case to be discovered and a great deal about the issue of central importance (Patton, 2015). Prospective participants were obtained through the human resource department of their respective home school district. Through purposeful sampling, all participants were African American male teachers, traditionally certified, and taught at schools with diverse student populations.

Participants indicated the types of students they teach and school demographics from the teacher demographic questionnaire (Appendix F).

Participants who were interviewed were recruited by contacting them via email to solicit their participation in the study. The email contains the nature and significance of the study and an invitation to participate in an interview (Appendix C). The email recipients were given seven days to reply to the invitation. Once 12 African American male teachers accepted the invitation, they underwent the process of informed consent for them to agree to participate in the study (Appendix E). They were given an informed consent form that provides information on the process and offers confidentiality and anonymity in the study. The participants signed the informed consent form as proof of their agreement to participate in the study. Participants were only allowed to participate in the interview if they agreed and signed the informed consent forms.

The participants were interviewed on Teams in one-on-one interview sessions. Interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. The interview occurred at an agreed specific time by the interviewer and participants. The interview participants were given the freedom to express their personal experiences and opinions about the phenomenon during the interview. The interview was interactive to obtain in-depth responses.

All interviews were audio recorded. The recording was transcribed for data analysis. The participants were aware that they were being recorded and notes were being taken. The sample will help address the research questions and furnish additional information regarding their preparation for the student populations that they serve (Patton, 2015). Yin (2009) stated in a multi-case design, the number of cases, or the sample size, should be determined by the number of case replications the researcher desires. Stake (1995) stressed balance, variety, and the

opportunity to learn are the primary factors of importance in choosing a sampling size. Two or three cases do not provide the interaction necessary to highlight the phenomenon of interest 15 or 30 cases do (Stake,1995). Twelve participants were chosen for this study through purposeful criterion sampling to provide a higher possibility of replication. The researcher's use of the school district directory satisfied this sampling strategy.

### **Data Collection Plan**

Data collection is an essential component of the research process. The data is the information used to explain the study's findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). This study used three methods of data collection: (a) interview, (b) a focus group, and (c) document analysis/letter writing. Each Black male participated in in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews took place over time rather than in a single sitting. Participant interviews and document analysis span over three months. General interview questions were developed based on the research questions and the theoretical framework of the research. The interview questions were used as a guide; additional questions were asked in response to the participants' information. One cannot freely predict the specific information from participants that may become relevant to a case.

### **Individual Interviews**

Interviews are one of the most effective data collection methods for case study researchers and can yield insights into participants' experiences (Yin, 2018). Interviews also allow the researcher to reveal information that cannot be collected through direct observations (Patton, 2015). Questions utilized during the interviews resembled guided conversations rather than systemized surveys or reports (Yin, 2018). As such, this study employed open-ended interview questions that focused on providing an in-depth, detailed experience of self-disclosure. An extended interview approach was followed, which allowed for a detailed examination of a

participant's "insights, explanations, and meanings connected to certain occurrences" (Yin, 2018, p. 151).

Experts in the field reviewed the interview questions to guarantee accuracy. Yin (2018) provided several valuable strategies for creating thoughtful interview questions. When creating interview questions, Yin proposed focusing on "how" rather than "why" questions, as the latter often can feel menacing or threatening. Interview questions should be open-minded and easily understood and understood by the participant (Patton, 2015). Skilled interviewing also entails that the interviewer is alert and receptive. In-depth interviewing helps understand the meaning of participants' lived experiences and allows a participant's story to be told (Seidman, 2019).

Participants' sharing their challenges and stories while interviewing is critical. Therefore, the researcher listened more than talk, asked clarifying questions, and avoided interrupting and asking open-ended questions (Seidman, 2019). The first step for compelling interviews is preparation, and discussions in this study required little preparation ahead of the meeting. The following open-ended interview questions were asked during the individual interviews. Behind each question is CQ or SQ, which means it corresponds with specific sub-questions and the study's central question.

### ***Individual Interview Questions***

1. Please describe your educational challenges in your current position. CRQ
2. Describe the racial challenges you face in the early childhood classroom. SQ1
3. What are some strategies employed to address racial challenges encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ1
4. Would you like to provide any additional racial challenges that you have encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ1

5. Describe the cultural challenges you face in the early childhood classroom. SQ2
6. What are some strategies employed to address cultural challenges encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ2
7. Would you like to provide any additional cultural challenges that you have encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ2
8. Describe the socioeconomic challenges you face in the early childhood classroom. SQ3
9. What are some strategies employed to address socioeconomic challenges encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ3
10. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with lower socioeconomic status students that we have not discussed? SQ3
11. Would you like to provide any additional socioeconomic challenges that you have encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ3

### ***Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan***

Qualitative data analysis is commonly accomplished through a five-phase process that includes compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding the data (Yin, 2015). Informal analysis typically begins during the initial stages of data collection, while the formal analysis begins by compiling and arranging field notes accumulated throughout fieldwork and other data collection initiatives (Yin, 2015). The interviews were recorded and notes were taken. The audio and notes from the interview were transcribed, and the information was compared for accuracy. The data was transcribed to start the categorical aggregation process. Microsoft Teams transcription, as well as Rev.com, were used to transcribe the data. Each interview was transcribed within 24 hours of the interview to increase the accuracy of the



information. The responses to the interview question were first checked with the recording and confirmed with the notes.

After the initial stage of compiling and organizing the data, the next phase required the data to be separated. Disassembling the data suggests that the data are taken apart, and meaningful groups should be created, in essence, codes, resulting in the next phase of data analysis, reassembling, and arranging (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). During the disassembling stage, initial codes were created. Then, frequent common themes and concepts mentioned during the interviews were noted. It was vital to repeat the process of coding, evaluation, and interpretation several times to construct meaning from transcribed data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once the data were coded, reassembling occurred as themes were identified and patterns and relationships among the dataset emerged (Yin, 2015). Data from the interviews were organized, interpreted, categorized, synthesized, and coded for patterns. Each interview question was color-coded using focused codes and categories, such as perspective suggested by the participants, patterns, themes, and concepts.

Additionally, interpretations should accurately represent the raw data while adding value to the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study and utilizing the rearranged data to create a new narrative (Yin, 2015). The last phase of the data analysis phase is concluding. The researcher should be confident that a reasonable conclusion has been met, which means another researcher provided with the same information will arrive in a similar space of truth. Yin (2015) explained that the concluding is connected to the interpretation phase, which relates to all other data analysis phases.

### **Focus Groups**

The focus group procedure called to recruit and convened a small group of persons (Yin, 2018). Focus groups are valuable when the communication amongst interviewees likely yields the best information. When interviewees are similar and supportive, when time to collect information is limited, and when individuals are interviewed one-on-one, they may be timid to offer information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus group provided interaction among interviewees, the collection of extensive data, and participation by all individuals in a group (Harnish et al., 2017). Yin (2018) found focus groups allow the moderator to surface views from each person in the group.

The goal was to learn more about commonalities and differences while affirming and expanding upon the teachers' initial responses (Patton, 2015). Moreover, this approach was appropriate as respondents were more inclined to share their challenges in a group setting than individual discussions (Ducan, 2019). The focus group was utilized as a way for participants to give extra information and for the researcher to seek more clarification on any points that were still unclear.

### ***Focus Group Questions***

1. Please introduce yourself to the group. General Question
2. Hearing the words Black male teachers, what are the thoughts that come to mind?  
CRQ
3. Why do you think Black male teachers face numerous challenges in the early childhood classroom? CRQ
4. What challenges do you consider the most critical that you faced in the classroom?  
SQ1, SQ2, & SQ3

5. Looking back into entering the teaching field, what challenges including racial, cultural, socioeconomic challenges did you think you would face? Why? CRQ, SQ1, SQ2, & SQ3

### ***Focus Group Data Analysis Plan***

After gathering the data, it was analyzed using Yin's (2011) five-phase-process: (a) compiling the data, (b) disassembling the data, (c) reassembling the data, (d) interpreting the meaning of the data, and (e) concluding the data. Researchers must immerse themselves in the data on numerous occasions; doing so helps ensure that the researcher is familiar with the data before breaking the data into parts and looking for correlations (Yin, 2018). Upon compiling the collecting data from the focus group, data was transcribed. The data needed to be transcribed to be in textual form to begin the categorical aggregation process. Microsoft Teams transcription and Rev.com were used to transcribe the data. The transcribed data was read multiple times to ensure the participants' stories were comprehended.

The next stage is disassembling the data. The data was first labeled and organized in the data management system (Yin, 2009). The data was then be disassembled, and coded. Coding helped divide the information into parts that allowed for themes to be easily identified (Yin, 2018). During reassembling, patterns were revealed. Using multiple cases allowed the researcher the opportunity to identify patterns between the cases as well as differences. Yin (2014) explained that pattern matching occurs when the data observed in the field are compared to a theory.

### **Letter-Writing**

Document analysis is a qualitative inquiry method that involves examining papers, records, journals, or other artifacts to give meaning to a studied phenomenon (Bowen, 2009).

Each participant in the study participated in letter writing to provide their thoughts on paper rather than provide an oral response. The participants provided the researcher with a letter two weeks after the focus group was conducted. The letter writing topic was, "As a Black male early childhood teacher; what would you tell another prospective Black male about the challenges in the field?" This document provided insight into how the participants feel about being early childhood teachers and their overall perception of the job.

### ***Letter-Writing Data Analysis Plan***

Data analysis is one of the last steps in case study research (Yin, 2018). According to Clandinin and Connelly (1998), letters, unlike journals, are written with the expectations of response, meaning experiences, and hearing their voice through writing. Barton and Hall (2000) mentioned that letters offer a unique form of data representing the writer's thoughts, feelings, and observations. Upon receiving the letters from each participant, each letter was read two or more times to ensure understanding.

After reading each letter entirely, the data was disassembled and reassembled by color-coding the patterns that occurred (Yin, 2018). The data was entered into a spreadsheet for analysis to compare answers and codes to identify any emerging themes. The letter writing was analyzed to determine any themes connected to the literature and other forms of data collected to ensure triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009). Lastly, the information was validated and compared to the studies highlighted in the literature review. The combined information from all the previously mentioned data sources allowed for triangulation and duplication of this study. Stake (1995) suggested data source triangulation was the effort to establish if what was observed and reported carried the same meaning when found under different circumstances.

### **Data Synthesis**

Documents, records artifacts, and archives constitute a rich source of information regarding cases in case studies (Patton, 2015). Case study research can exempt researchers from being constrained by overly restrictive rules; researchers can analyze data by combining procedures, categorizing, examining, testing, tabulating, or recombining evidence. (Yin, 2018). To efficiently analyze all data and procedures, protocols were established to organize the data once collected. First, initial codes were created and used to find frequent common themes and concepts mentioned during the interviews and focus groups.

It was necessary to repeat the coding, evaluation, and interpretation process several times to construct meaning from transcribed data. The data obtained from participants was analyzed using within-case and cross-case analysis procedures as recommended by Yin (2009). Each case was comprehensively described, and themes particular to each case were identified using within-case analysis procedures (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Analyzing the rich descriptions of each case in this study allowed themes to emerge during each analysis (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009).

The key findings gradually moved into specific findings to help answer the research questions and resolve the research problem. Within-case and cross-case synthesis treated each case as a separate study and then aggregated the findings across each case series (Yin, 2014). Stake (1995) recommends this approach for multi-case studies because one of the main goals of a multi-case study is to build a general, understandable explanation that fits not only each case but also all the cases combined.

Data from the interviews, focus group, and letter writing was organized, interpreted, categorized, synthesized, and coded for patterns. Each interview response was individually color-coded using focused codes and categories, such as perspective, suggested by the participants,

patterns, themes, and concepts were colored based on (a) the occurrence in all sources of data, (b) evidence of the existence in the transcript, and (c) the correlation to the research questions guiding the study.

Field notes are widely recommended in qualitative research to collect important contextual information (Phillip, 2018); field notes taken during the interviews were also summarized to provide supplemental data, and were coded by themes during the analysis process. Research participants were given opportunities to examine all audio, written, and transcribed data from the interviews, confirming member check was carefully employed. Member checking, also known as participant validation, is a technique used to improve the rigor of qualitative research (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking is also used to validate, check, or analyze the quality of qualitative data. Member checking is a common validation approach based on the continual, informal verification of information by cementing respondents' answers to the investigator's reconstruction (Candela, 2019). Furthermore, member checking allowed participants to communicate their meanings and perspectives without influencing the researcher's knowledge, background, or intention.

### **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of a research study is important to acceptance into the academic world and to conduct further research on the topic. The goal of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are worth considering (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation is a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings. It allows researchers the opportunity to use a variety of methods to provide evidence. Triangulation involves corroborating evidence from different sources to provide an understanding of the viewpoints. Triangulation can help ensure that biases arising from the use

of a single method, or a single observer are overcome (Abdalla et al., 2018). Collecting data from only one source may lead to a narrow interpretation of data. It is crucial to have checks and balances in a research study. Creswell and Poth (2018) believed that trustworthiness is also a justification of the study and helps build the credibility of the researcher's work.

### **Credibility**

Stake (1995) suggested triangulation and member-checking ensure the interpretation of the study is valid and credible. For this study, data were triangulated from multiple sources, including individual interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Using various data sources fostered credibility to guarantee that the study results would be believable from a participant's perspective in the study. Also, to establish trustworthiness and ensure the data's credibility, a member checking process was employed. The approach included taking data, analyses, and interpretation back to the participants to evaluate the findings' accuracy and credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Transferability**

Transferability can replicate the study's results in another context (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability requires including thick, expressive detail to encourage others to apply the results to other settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the case of studies, external validity deals with knowing whether a study's findings are generalizable beyond the immediate research (Yin, 2018). Each case must be carefully selected to predict similar or contrasting results for anticipatable reasons (Yin, 2018). Sometimes, participants' shared experience using their quotes and stories was more impactful; this, too, was evidence of transferability (Patton, 2015).

### **Dependability**

In dependable studies, all processes and procedures can be successfully repeated, and the same outcomes occur (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Dependability refers to the permanency of the data's findings over an extended period, an audit trail realized by the consistent implementation of the research strategies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability was achieved in the present study by asking all participants the same questions, adhering to the same procedures for transcribing replies, and ensuring that all participants had the opportunity to verify the content of what has been captured from their conversations.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the researcher's ability to remain neutral and free from bias (Yin, 2018). Researchers should ensure that the participants' thoughts accurately portray the information and not the researchers' preferences. Understanding the researcher's role as a human instrument and bracketing their perspectives contributed to the trustworthiness of the research study (Yin, 2018). Confirmability was also achieved 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.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This researcher believes that integrity, honesty, and consideration for all involved in the study are critical to the research process. Participants were not tricked or forced to answer questions that made them uncomfortable. Being honest with the participants demonstrated positive rapport initiatives and transparency in the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checks allowed participants to review their interviews for accuracy before final drafts are submitted. Risk nor benefit occurred as a result of agreement or refusal to participate in the study. Participants were not compensated in any form for their participation in the study. To aid



in confidentiality, sites and participants were assigned pseudonyms. Reporting the findings was truthful for each participant and was not skewed to please the target institutions or the researcher. The researcher protected the confidentiality of participants; all audio recordings and files were locked and secured in a safe for three years in the researcher's attic. After the three-year mark, all files were shredded and destroyed.

### **Summary**

The study applied a multi-case research design to explore twelve African American male pre-kindergarten and kindergarten early childhood teachers' perceptions of their challenges in the early childhood classroom. This chapter demonstrates why this research design aligned best with this study. This design helped illuminate the phenomenon surrounding multiple cases. The target population of Black male pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers tends to be ignored by the literature. This chapter covered the data collection and analysis process in detail. Interviews, focus groups, and document analysis in the form of letter writing were data sources. Lastly, ethical considerations ensured the researcher-participant relationship is professional and protected the participants' anonymity and confidentiality. By conducting this study, these participants highlighted the racial, cultural, and socioeconomic challenges they face in the early childhood classroom.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this multi-case study was to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom. The research questions focused on the teachers' challenges they encounter in the classroom. This chapter includes the participant descriptions, themes from the data, and responses to the research questions. Data from individual interviews, focus group interviews, and letter writing was reviewed, analyzed, and combined to formulate the contents of this chapter.

### **Participants**

Table 1 contains a brief overview of the participants in the study. Pseudonym names were assigned to each participant for the purpose of confidentiality, and each of the 12 participants agreed to the pseudonyms issued to them. Each participant in the study was an African American male who taught pre-kindergarten or kindergarten at the time of data collection. Table 1 contains the teacher participants' names, years taught, highest degree earned, and the grade level that is currently being taught. Table 2 provides demographic data on the participants.

**Table 1***Teacher Participants*

| Teacher Participants | Years Taught | Highest Degree Earned | Grade Level Taught |
|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Nathan               | 5            | Bachelor's            | Kindergarten       |
| Caleb                | 8            | Bachelor's            | Kindergarten       |
| Joel                 | 5            | Master's              | Pre-Kindergarten   |
| Mike                 | 7            | Bachelor's            | Kindergarten       |
| Tyler                | 2            | Bachelor's            | Pre-Kindergarten   |
| Jayce                | 7            | Master's              | Pre-Kindergarten   |
| Kenneth              | 5            | Bachelor's            | Pre-Kindergarten   |
| Arden                | 5            | Bachelor's            | Kindergarten       |
| Frank                | 7            | Bachelor's            | Kindergarten       |
| Benjamin             | 8            | Bachelor's            | Kindergarten       |
| Jonathan             | 2            | Bachelor's            | Pre-Kindergarten   |
| Logan                | 4            | Bachelor's            | Pre-Kindergarten   |

**Table 2***Demographic Questionnaire*

| Characteristic                         | Number of Responses |
|--|---------------------|
| Job Title/Grade Level                  |                     |
| Pre-kindergarten                       | 6                   |
| Kindergarten                           | 8                   |
| Other Grades Taught                    |                     |
| Only Pre-kindergarten and Kindergarten | 12                  |
| First grade and up                     | 0                   |
| How long have you been a teacher?      |                     |
| 1–5 years                              | 7                   |
| 5–10 years                             | 5                   |
| 10–20 years                            | 0                   |

**Nathan**

Nathan is a 32-year-old kindergarten teacher at Hope Elementary School. He has taught kindergarten for five years, has a bachelor's degree in elementary education, and is certified to teach pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. His former teacher motivated Nathan to become a teacher at a young age. When asked about himself, he said, "I am an early childhood educator because they need Black men in the schools."

**Caleb**

Caleb is a 27-year-old kindergarten teacher at Manhattan Elementary School. He has taught pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. He has taught for a total of eight years, has a bachelor's degree, and is certified in birth-kindergarten. When asked about himself, he responded, "I initially was a long-term substitute for pre-kindergarten and fell in love with the little kiddos and knew that this was my calling." Caleb stated, "I feel they need people like me to get the Black boys on a straight path at a young age."

**Joel**

Joel is a 28-year-old pre-kindergarten teacher at Manhattan Elementary School. He taught pre-kindergarten for five years, has a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, and is certified to teach pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. When asked about himself, he responded, "I feel like I became a teacher because I was inspired by so many incredible teachers that I had because they had a desire for what they taught which impacted my life." When talking about that inspiration, Joel said, "I want to do the same for my students."

**Mike**

Mike is a 31-year-old kindergarten teacher at Hope Elementary School. He has taught kindergarten for seven years, has a bachelor's degree in birth-kindergarten education, and is

certified in birth–kindergarten. When asked about himself, Mike responded, "The reason I started teaching is my mom was a teacher, and when she retired, I decided I wanted to be like her. Teaching is the most difficult job in the world, and I want the world to see that I can do it."

### **Tyler**

Tyler is a 27-year-old beginning pre-kindergarten teacher at Wimbledon Elementary School. He has taught pre-kindergarten for two years, and Tyler has a bachelor's degree in birth–kindergarten and is certified in birth–kindergarten. When asked about himself, Tyler responded, "Teaching was my calling, and I knew young Black boys needed to see me so they would know that could be them in the future." He also stated, "Black boys are used to seeing Black males on the street selling drugs. I want them to see a Black male with a tie doing good work."

### **Jayce**

Jayce is a 27-year-old pre-kindergarten teacher at Wimbledon Elementary School. He has been teaching pre-kindergarten for seven years. Jayce has a master's degree in early childhood and is certified in birth–kindergarten. When asked about himself, Jayce responded, "I don't know why but I just I always wanted to be a teacher since I was like eight years old." He said, "There was not any specific person or anything that had anything to do with me becoming an educator; it just looked like a lot of fun, and I continued to feel that way as I got older."

### **Kenneth**

Kenneth is a 30-year-old pre-kindergarten teacher at Hope Elementary School. He has been teaching pre-kindergarten for five years. Kenneth has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and is certified in elementary education with an add-on in birth–kindergarten education. When asked about himself, Kenneth responded, "Being a teacher was my ultimate

dream I knew I would not make a lot of money, but I knew little Black boys and girls needed to see a Black man at an early age.”

### **Arden**

Arden is a 35-year-old kindergarten teacher at Wimbledon Elementary School. He has been teaching kindergarten for five years. Arden has a bachelor's degree in birth–kindergarten education and is certified in birth–kindergarten. When asked about himself, Arden responded, "When arriving at college, I had no clue what I wanted to do. By my sophomore year, I realized I wanted to be a teacher. After observing a kindergarten classroom, I knew that's where I needed to be."

### **Frank**

Frank is a 29-year-old kindergarten teacher at Lakeview Elementary School. Frank has been teaching kindergarten for seven years, and he has a bachelor's degree in birth–kindergarten and is licensed in birth–kindergarten. When asked about himself, Frank responded, "My mother taught for over 30 years, and it made a profound impact on my life, and I knew I wanted to follow her path," Frank also responded, "I feel that all students no matter the race need to encounter a Black man as their teacher."

### **Benjamin**

Benjamin is a 35-year-old kindergarten teacher at Lakeview Elementary School. Benjamin has been teaching pre-kindergarten for eight years. Benjamin has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and is licensed in elementary education. When asked about himself, Benjamin responded, "I can remember being in kindergarten, and I loved that grade. I had a White male teacher who taught me, and I remember relating to him. I knew that I would want to

follow in his footsteps and be a kindergarten teacher and hopefully have an impact on my students.”

### **Jonathan**

Jonathan is a 26-year-old beginning pre-kindergarten teacher at Hope Elementary School. Jonathan has been teaching pre-kindergarten for two years. He has a bachelor's degree in birth–kindergarten education and is licensed in birth–kindergarten. When asked about himself, Jonathan responded, "I feel that teaching was my calling. I prayed day and night, and God showed me what I needed to do. Students need to see me in the classroom, so they know it is not just a women's job."

### **Logan**

Logan is a 30-year-old pre-kindergarten teacher at Wimbledon Elementary School. Logan has been teaching pre-kindergarten for four years. He has a bachelor's degree in birth–kindergarten education and is licensed in birth–kindergarten. When asked about himself, he responded, "I enjoyed pre-kindergarten and knew I wanted to teach this grade for many years. Most people believe a woman should be in the classroom, but my goal is to show everyone that this is a man's job as well."

## **Results**

This multi-case study aimed to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. This study was guided by one central research question and three sub-research questions. Virtual interviews, virtual focus groups, and letter writing were used to collect, synthesize, and analyze the data obtained from the participants. Data were transcribed, organized, and manually coded, and themes were identified. The following section includes the major themes and subthemes

generated from analyzing the raw data. Each theme is supported with direct quotes from the participants. Table 3 displays the major themes, sub-themes, and accompanying codes.

After transcription and member checking, each participant's transcript was read and general notes with short descriptions were made to generalize the meaning of the challenges they faced. The data was disaggregated into brief descriptive starting codes using open coding (Creswell, 2019). Once all the data were transcribed, they were read multiple times to ensure the researcher comprehended the participants' stories. The researcher then began the process of open coding. The first cycle of coding began by employing open coding; the researcher was able to establish the major categories of information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After a detailed analysis of the data collected, 15 codes emerged from the 12 cases. This type of initial coding is especially useful for extracting a subculture's unique way of speaking or use of metaphors to frame them in context (Saldaña, 2015). The researcher then began the second cycle of coding, the process of axial coding. Using the collected data, the codes were developed into three overall themes and separated into three categories.

Table 3 shows all participants shared similar experiences based on the codes created. The codes were narrowed down to categories. The final number of categories identified by participants was fifteen (Creswell, 2019). After evaluating the interviews and focus groups, the first code was created and further evolved into an open code. Three main themes and seven sub-themes were identified from open coding. Table 4 shows the themes and sub-themes for each triangulation data source.



**Table 3***Codes and Categories*

| Codes                | Categories          |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Lack of material     | Resources           |
| Low-income           | Socioeconomic       |
| Parental involvement | Parent support      |
| Culturally inviting  | Cultural            |
| Monetary Assistance  | Resources           |
| Behavior             | School support      |
| Medication           | Parent support      |
| Stereotype           | Racism              |
| Father not present   | Parent support      |
| Scarce               | Black male teachers |
| Language barrier     | Cultural            |
| Health               | Socioeconomic       |
| Safety               | School support      |
| Race                 | Racism              |
| Delay                | School support      |

**Table 4***Themes and Subthemes*

| Theme         | Subthemes   |
|---------------|---|
| Racial        | Being a Black male teacher, lack of support, lack of respect from all parties |
| Culture       | Appearance, language  |
| Socioeconomic | Low-income families, discipline   |

**Theme 1: Racial**

Racial challenges were present in several of the participants' interview responses. The participants were asked for strategies employed to address racial challenges encountered in the classroom. According to Logan, "The only strategies I have seen are the teachers trying harder to work with children of color." Ten of the 12 teachers indicated being a Black teacher is the most complicated job one can have because it is hard being Black in this world. Jayce mentioned,

“That so far, I have not experienced any racial challenges, but he has received funny looks when parents walk into the classroom for the first time.”

The focus groups provided additional data from the teachers on their challenges in the early childhood classroom. Two focus groups were held, one with five teachers and the second with seven teachers. The focus group discussions supported the central research questions, three sub-questions, and two of the three themes identified in the interviews. Letter writing provided further perspective from participants about being a Black male teacher and to help other Black male that may want to become a teacher but fear that they may not be a fit due to their race and gender.

### ***Subtheme: Being a Black Male Teacher***

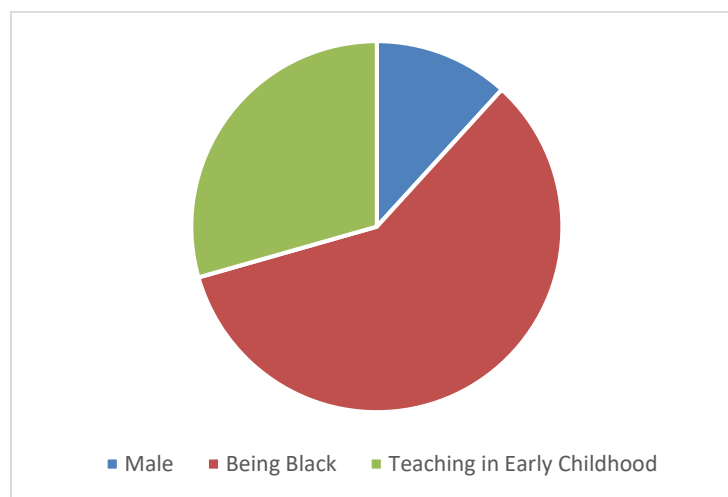
The participants in the focus group emphasized the difficulty of being a Black male teacher. Joel stated, “Being Black is hard in America but being a Black male teacher is even harder the looks we get, and the negative attitudes are difficult to deal with.” Mike said, “I never thought it would be so challenging to do something you love.” Nathan indicated, “I have a bachelor’s in education now, and I may go for a master’s in administration to get out of the classroom because sometimes I feel all the headache is not worth it.” The second question in the focus group asked participants for the thoughts that came to mind when hearing about Black male teachers.

In a letter-writing, Joel wrote, “I never thought my color would affect so much in my life. I am scared to bring a colored child into this world because it is not made for them.” Nathan mentioned, “If you want to be a Black male teacher, no matter the grade, you better have tough skin because you will go through things you would never think of.” The participants were asked what the most challenging part of being a teacher were. Figure 1 displays these responses. Ten

percent stated being a male, 50 percent expressed being Black, and 25 percent said teaching in the early childhood classroom.

### **Figure 1**

*Participant Responses Regarding Challenges of Being a Teacher*



### ***Subtheme: Lack of Support***

Support is essential; whether it is a job, social, school, or family, support can positively impact one's life in countless ways (Ducan, 2019). Caleb said, "In the classroom, I lack parental support, and parents seem to not care about the child's performance in the classroom. In Kindergarten, they are learning how to read, and the parents need to work with them each night." Many participants did not have to learn the skills that are now mandatory in the early childhood classroom. Benjamin stated,

Kindergarten is the new first grade, and we need support from parents and administration. The administration needs to provide the needed resources because these kids come from a home where the parent lets them use technology all day and teaching them to read and write is nearly impossible.

Arden expressed in letter-writing that “you will never get the support you deserve in the classroom.” People look at you as tough because you are a Black male and think you don't need help which is not valid.

***Subtheme: Lack of Respect From all Parties***

Respect is vital in the school system. When all parties respect a teacher, it will make the school run smoothly. In this study, the parties are considered students, teachers, parents, and the administration. Many participants have encountered a lack of respect in the classroom. Jonathan expressed, “My principal does not respect me or my classroom many times, and she has said pre-kindergarten is a waste of time because the students only play.” Jonathan also stated, “Pre-kindergarten is the most important grade because that is where it all begins. The students come in scared and leave out a different person, which is good.” Frank mentioned, “The students do not respect me because of their parents. Their parents will walk in and do not acknowledge me, and kids learn from their parents, which can sometimes be a bad thing.” Tyler has also encountered similar with his coworkers; he stated, “My coworkers do not take pre-kindergarten seriously. During staff meetings they do not recognize the pre-kindergarten they will skip over us and go to the kindergarten teachers.”

**Theme 2: Culture**

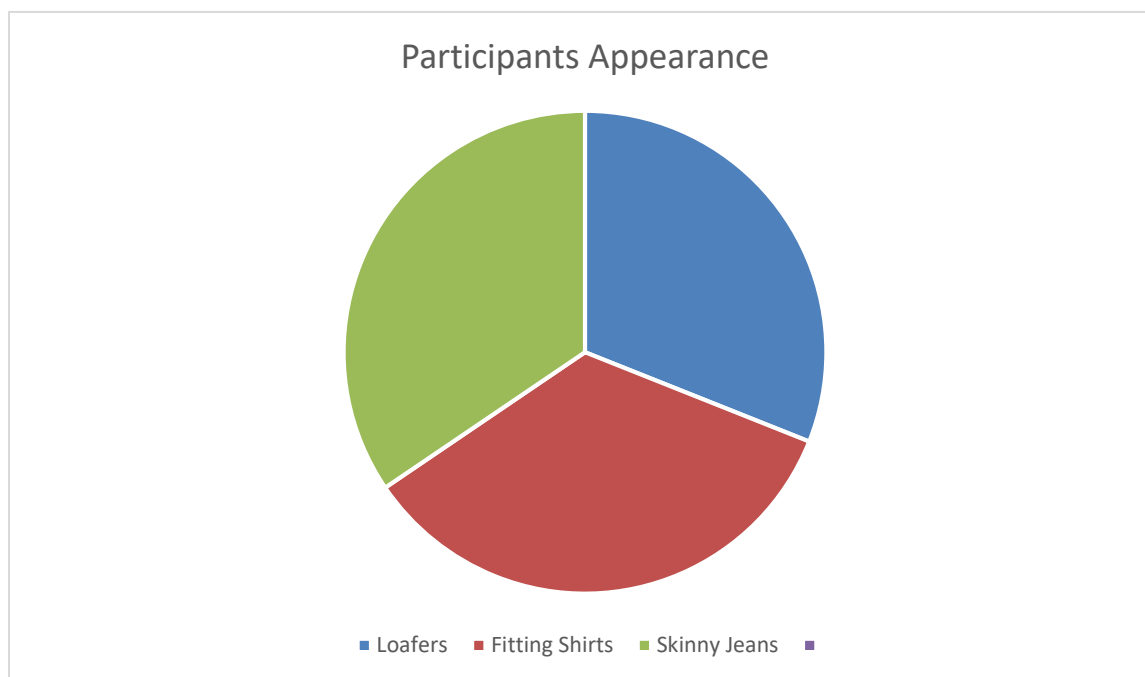
The second theme was culture. All participants mentioned the cultural challenges they faced in the classroom. Logan asserted, “Culture challenges experienced was [sic] trying to teach all of my students about the various cultures and some parents are objective to their child learning about other cultures however I do believe it is an enriching aspect to teach.” Jayce had similar thoughts, “I try to teach the students about different cultures because it is important; I hate those parents are not aware of the importance of culture.”

### Subtheme 4: Appearance

Dress and appearance are a significant part of almost every culture. Logan mentioned, “I wear skinny jeans and loafers most of the time, and I have heard one of my students say, ‘my mom thinks he is gay.’” Joel said, “A lot has changed since the 80s; we as men wear straight legs and tight shirts; it's the style now, and I love it.” Nathan also shared, “It should not matter how you look; we are all individuals and deserve to be treated equally; if I like to wear clothes that fit, that's my culture and my choice.” Jayce shared in his letter-writing, “I wear skinny jeans, fitting shirts, and loafer every day; it is my style, and I love it, but I get looks from older coworkers, but I do not let it bother me.” Figure 2 displays the participant's appearance in terms of dress daily.

**Figure 2**

*Participants Appearance*



***Subtheme: Language***

Participants discussed how language and slang have impacted their time in the early childhood classroom. Kenneth said, “I have to get used to not saying certain things because parents may look at me as unprofessional because of my words.” Living in this world, they see us Black men as trouble, uneducated, and the list goes on.” Caleb also had similar thoughts, “Being a Black male teacher, I have to keep it professional at all times because they are looking for me to fail, and I will make sure that will never happen.”

**Theme 3: Socioeconomic Factors**

Socioeconomic factors were mentioned in all participant's interviews and focus groups. In the pre-kindergarten classroom, 90 percent or more of the families are low-income families, which is a criterion for eligibility to attend pre-kindergarten (NC DHHS, n.d.). Joel said, "socioeconomic status plays a big role in the classroom because that student is likely to be behind."

***Subtheme: Low-Income Families***

Tyler mentioned, “All my student’s families are low-income, which makes it difficult because I do not ask them for anything even though I need things sometimes.” Caleb stated, “Thankfully, I teach kindergarten, and only fifty percent of my students are low-income, and I can tell the difference, which can be difficult.” Jonathan had a similar opinion as Tyler because he is also a pre-kindergarten teacher; his thoughts were, “Having a low-income class is not easy because parent involvement is scarce, and I need their support.”

***Subtheme: Discipline***

Low socioeconomic impacts the way parents perform parental duties (Thomas, 2020). Joel stated, “I feel most of my students do not get disciplined in the home because when I get at

them, they become agitated.” Jayce experienced a similar phenomenon, “My students will throw a fit whenever they have to sit out for a few minutes, and it makes it difficult because I do not want to punish them because of the outcome.” Kenneth said, “When we have celebrations, I buy everything because I am nervous to ask the families because I know a lot of them are struggling, and I do not want them to get upset with me.” Benjamin mentioned,

I try to be understandable and not judge because I know everyone is trying to make it, so if we are doing something special in the class, I will ask each parent to sign up for something, and whatever is left, I will purchase and that seems to work out pretty good for me.

### **Outlier Data and Findings**

Two outliers are worth discussing. These outliers were themes that emerged during the discussion of racial challenges encountered in the classroom; both were mentioned during the interview and focus group. Thirty percent of the participants indicated a concern about medication for students of color and testing for students of color.

#### ***Outlier Finding #1: Medication for Black Students***

Two participants have encountered Black students in their classroom being prescribed medication due to excessive energy. Logan wrote he was being observed by an administrator and was told to have a conference with the parent because something seemed wrong. The participant knew administration wanted the child to be observed by a therapist and be placed on medication. Another participant has encountered the same thing and felt that this was because the student was Black. Another participant said, “The first thing they want for the Black student is medication instead of finding other tools and resources to help, they want the Blacks medicated.”

### ***Outlier Finding #2: Testing for Black Students***

Testing students has always been critical because data is essential to teachers and administration. Ironically, several participants indicated that they are made to test students twice a week, and most Black students must retest because administration place a strong emphasis on data. Tyler stated, "These kids are tired of testing; most Black students in my class are not good test-takers, but they know the material." One participant mentioned that he is not a good test taker, but he always did well in school, and that is how most of his students are that a test should not define whether a child is considered competent. Although these codes were unexpected, the results did not change.

### **Research Question Responses**

The multi-case study focused on the challenges African American male teachers face in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. This study was guided by one central research question and three sub questions. The interviews focus groups, and letter writing attempted to answer once central question and three sub questions.

### **Central Research Question**

What challenges do African American male early childhood teachers encounter in the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom? Through a review of the literature, data collection, and data analysis, this study was able to identify three major types of challenges these teachers face in the classroom. The challenges were identified as racial, cultural, and socioeconomic challenges. All participants mentioned they face countless challenges in the classroom. Logan stated, "Working in the pre-kindergarten classroom has been one of the worst experiences I have faced in my life." Joel said, "Being Black is one of the hardest things, and being a male makes it even harder." All participants felt being a Black male teacher in the early childhood classroom



was rare but very rewarding. Through data collection and analysis, this study assisted with understanding some of the challenges African American male teachers face in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms.

### **Sub Question 1**

What racial challenges do African American males encounter in the early childhood classroom? There are many racial challenges African American males encounter in the early childhood classroom. Joel mentioned during the interview, “I have noticed that Black boys’ behavior is always pointed out after my administration observes me.” Nathan also stated, “When parents walk in the classroom and see me, I can see their heart drop knowing their child will have a Black man as their teacher.” Jayce encountered one of his parents talking to the principal about having a Black male teacher; the parent said they did not feel comfortable. Jayce noted, “Thankfully, my principal had my back because I am here to make a difference for all boys and girls; my skin color should not be an issue.” One participant has not encountered any racism and was surprised and happy at the same time because he is the only Black teacher in the elementary grade levels at his school.

### **Sub Question 2**

What cultural challenges do African American males encounter in the early childhood classroom? Cultural challenges can include language, behavior, beliefs, etiquette, and more. The participants in the study have been faced with cultural challenges in their classrooms. Caleb stated, “Being a Black man and how I talk seems to affect many parents and coworkers. At times the words I say such as ‘cool, what’s up,’ is considered ghetto to some of my colleagues.” Kenneth believes all students should say “yes sir” and “no sir” as part of being respectful. He said, “I had a conference with a parent, and the parent said that the child does not have to say that

because it is not their belief.” He also stated, “To make things easier, I said it is ok for the student to say yes or no because I did not want to go back and forth with the parent.”

### **Sub Question 3**

What socioeconomic challenges do African American males encounter in the early childhood classroom? The final sub-question addresses the socioeconomic challenges African American males face in the early childhood classroom. Data analysis identified two socioeconomic challenges: low-income families and discipline. The participants expressed their hardship in the classroom due to a lack of money. Moreover, participants felt that they had to use a lot of their money to get what was needed in the classroom and wanted. Mike described, “Each month we have a celebration and most of the time I have to buy everything. I don’t think the parents do not want to help. I think it’s because they do not have the extra funds.” Arden mentioned, “It has been times parents have written me and said I bought this at the beginning of the year; why do he or she need it again.”

Kenneth also encountered a parent saying they bought it initially and will not repurchase it. Logan said, “It seems like low-income families do not discipline their kids; they come in the room and think they can do as they please.” Jayce mentioned, “I had a student tell me to shut up, and I contacted their parents, and they laughed and said he does it at home.” Nathan said, “It is sad not having parents' support because if it does not start at home, it is difficult to get it right in the classroom.”

### **Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to present the results of the data analysis. The data analysis process involved open and axial coding. This chapter focused on the findings related to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. The chapter summarized the participants in the

study, including their pseudonym, years taught, highest degree earned, and the grade level currently being taught. This multi-case study aimed to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. The study involved 12 African American male pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers. The data collection methods consisted of virtual interviews, virtual focus groups, and letter writing. The codes were developed using the collected data and organized into three overall themes and seven subthemes. The three themes were racial, cultural, and socioeconomic factors. The subthemes were (a) being a Black male teacher, (b) lack of support, (c) lack of respect from all parties, (d) appearance, (e) language and slang, (f) low-income families, and (g) discipline. The research questions were answered, indicating the racial, cultural, and socioeconomic challenges African American male pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers' face in the classroom.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this multi-case study was to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. A discussion of the interpretations of the findings, the implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, the limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research are included in this chapter. The chapter concludes with an overall summary of the study.

### **Discussion**

Based on the participants being African American male pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers, the study investigates the challenges they encountered in the classroom. The shared challenges of 12 participants were grouped into three themes. The target population of African American male early childhood teachers tends to be ignored by the literature, which typically focusing on high school teachers of this demographic. Further research was needed to understand these men's challenges in the early childhood grades. The study was conducted in the central and northeastern regions of North Carolina. The three themes that emerged from the data were racial, cultural, and socioeconomic. The subthemes were (a) being a Black male teacher, (b) lack of support, (c) lack of respect from all parties, (d) appearance, (e) language, (f) low-income families, and (g) discipline. This section addresses the study's findings in relation to the themes and supports the interpretation of those findings with empirical and theoretical literature and participant narrative evidence. Interpretation of findings, implications for policy or practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research are all included in the discussion.

## **Interpretation of Findings**

There is a significant gap in documenting the challenges African American male teachers face in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. The study's themes and subthemes provided additional insight and reinforced existing literature. Research on Black male teachers has informed the field's emerging understanding of the complex ways this population understands their own racial, gendered, and sexual identities, and the identities of their students and colleagues, as they navigate the teaching profession (Woodson & Bristol, 2020). CRT and CRP were the theoretical perspectives that guided the entire study. This theoretical lens was critical in maintaining how race and culture shape many of the challenges presented in this study (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

### ***Summary of Thematic Findings***

The following three primary themes emerged from data analysis: racial, cultural, and socioeconomic. The themes aligned with the theoretical framework of this multi-case research study. The subthemes that occurred were (a) being a Black male teacher, (b) lack of support, (c) lack of respect from all parties, (d) appearance, (e) language, (f) low-income families, and (g) discipline. The subtheme being a Black male teacher was an issue all the participants have encountered. Logan mentioned in his letter writing "Being a Black male is the most challenging job one can have", while Nathan wrote I" wonder if other races have to deal with what I deal with." The subtheme of language was a challenge 10 out of 12 participants encountered. Being Black, male, and a teacher was also a theme that revealed itself in this study. Participants disclosed their views on the low number of Black males in education and feelings and reflections on how they felt isolated not only in their places of work but also when they were earning their teaching credentials. Participants shared experiences where intersections of culture played a role

in how they relate to students and practice their craft. Substantiated by the work of Kunjufu (2002, 2011) cultural clashes were highlighted, in addition to issues surrounding socioeconomic factors that influence how students perceive Black male teachers.

**Interpretation 1: Commitment.** All participants in the study have faced many challenges while working in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. One of the most important aspects that motivates instructors to stay in the field is the student engagement and improvement that they get from it. Many of the participants stated their delight at the wonderful emotions they experience because of their interactions with the students. Some of the scenarios included seeing students years later, attending past students' graduations in elementary school, or just receiving comments from students during class. Caleb stated that one of his motivations for staying in the classroom is that he enjoys working with children. He claims that the only things that motivate him to stay are the children's smiles and the knowledge that he has made a difference.

**Interpretation 2: Role Models.** Being a role model for students was the most repetitive factor that came into discussion. The participants highlighted the value of being there for the students and the impact of their presence in the classroom. Owens (2018) discussed participants from a study that communicated the lack of role models as a reason that they entered the education workforce. King mentioned participants had a critical reason for entering the field of education, which was the lack of good role models in their youth. According to Nathan, "Young Black males need Black role models." Nathan expressed the need for African American males to be viewed positively in contrast to what is seen in the media. Tillman (1992) reflected on his experiences as being a role model to sons of single mothers. According to Joel, "Being a Black male in the classroom I want little Black boys to see me as something bigger."

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

There will always be challenges African American male teachers face whether they teach in early childhood grades or higher grade levels. African American male teachers face more face more challenges than White male teachers (Parsons & Turner, 2014). Therefore, there are both policy and practice implications associated with this study.

#### ***Implications for Policy***

These implications for policy are suggested in relation to policies, procedures, and regulations that educational programs, school districts, and professional associations may consider in helping African American men seeking early childhood teaching positions. As school district populations become more diverse, school educators should be more representative of the populations served. School districts should develop training opportunities to expand the skills of African American males interested in pursuing teaching roles. Several participants mentioned not having people they relate to was one issue in their letter writing. Jayce wrote, “It is hard staying in this position because I have no one to talk to or relate to, and someday that becomes difficult.” Networking, relationship building, and roles are all critical components to the success of African American males seeking early childhood teaching positions.

School districts would benefit from investing in the teaching development of African American males already employed in their district. Actions such as supporting professional development and providing opportunities for these males to demonstrate their capabilities will offer school districts that may help recruit more Black males to want to teach the early childhood grades. Arden stated, “We need to recruit more Black males to teach these early grades, so little Black boys can see that it can be done.”

### ***Implications for Practice***

This study gave African American male early childhood teachers an opportunity to be heard; allowing them to share the challenges they face in their classroom. The results of this study offer more than a few critical implications for early childhood education and society as a whole. The first implication centers on getting more Black male teachers in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. Educators have advocated for decades that teachers in the United States should be diverse and representational of the students they teach (Young & Young, 2020). High school counselors, college recruiters, and K–12 educational administrators should evaluate the opportunities and skill sets that Black male instructors possess and see this as a method to improve school-age children's educational outcomes.

For this to happen, there needs to be a constant call to action for more Black male teachers, similar to the one issued by former Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. In 2011, he announced a request for more teachers from racial and ethnic minority groups to enter the classroom in the United States. This referendum has two goals: first, to ensure qualified teachers for a new generation of learners, and second, to ensure new teachers who will be replacing a large number of retiring teachers in the coming years reflect the diversity of ethnicity and gender that exists in schools. Given that schools now have more children of color than White students, initiatives like this, combined with awareness, programs, access to such programs, and promotion by interested entities, will boost the presence and contributions of Black male educators in our classrooms.

### **Theoretical and Empirical Implications**

One central and three research questions drove this multi-case study. The results of this study suggested that there are substantial challenges African American male pre-kindergarten



and kindergarten teachers encounter in the classroom. Through a review of the literature, data collection, and data analysis, this study was able to identify three major types of challenges faced by Black male early childhood educators. Their challenges were identified as racial, cultural, and socioeconomic challenges. CRT and CRP guided this study and assisted with answering the research questions. This theoretical lens was critical in maintaining how race culture shapes many of the challenges in the study. Most research has focused on African American male teachers in middle and high school.

The CRT provided a theoretical foundation for starting conversations with male early childhood instructors of color about their concerns. This study required CRP theory because it helped to overcome the deficiency narratives associated with historically underprivileged pupils of color. Instead of portraying student culture as an excuse for student failure, teachers who implement CRP use it as a helpful tool for learning. As a result, important voices and viewpoints are required to hold minorities accountable for solving the situation (Brown, 2017).

The empirical implications of this study are significant due to the lack of data examining African American males in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. The study's findings were consistent with the results from the literature review in Chapter 2. African American male teachers face challenges in three distinct areas: racial, cultural, and socioeconomics. In addition to identifying the challenges, the study also analyzed the challenges these Black men face. Participants wrote a letter and tell African American males who may want to teach lower grades their challenges and how they overcame them.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

In every study, there are limitations, and this study was not exempt. Limitations of any study relate to potential flaws that are typically outside the researcher's control and are strongly

correlated with the research design used, limitations of the statistical model, the timing of data collection, sample size, instrumentation, and data analysis techniques or other variables (Dimitrios & Antigoni, 2019). The qualitative findings were based on a small sample, and the findings may not apply to other teachers in different environments. The data were analyzed and collected by a first-time researcher, a more experienced researcher could have obtained higher quality data and themed the data differently. The instrumentation and data collection methods are also limitations of the study. Although the instrumentation questions were open-ended, the researcher assumed all participant responses were truthful.

There were also delimitations in this study. Delimitations are essentially the boundaries that the authors have purposefully established. To prevent the study's goals and objectives from becoming impractical, they are concerned with the definitions that the researchers choose to establish as the borders or limits of their work (Dimitrios & Antigoni, 2019). Delimitations of the study include the limited region of the two sites. The study was delimited to the northeastern and central regions of North Carolina. The study was also delimited to Black male pre-kindergarten and kindergarten certified teachers teaching at diverse schools.

Finally, there appeared to be a level of comfort with the participants responding to these sensitive interviews and focus group questions because the interviewer was African American. Therefore, having an interviewer of a different race has the potential to distort the responses to the questions asked during the interview and focus group. The generalizability of the study could be enhanced by expanding the region, participant eligibility, research site, and sample population.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This section proposes recommendations for future avenues of research indicated by the findings and conclusions of this study. Because of the significant gap in scholarly literature on this target population, this study served to add research on the challenges African American male teachers encountered in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms, and these recommendations will suggest ways to assist current and potential teachers in mitigating the challenges they face.

1. The purpose of this multi-case study was to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom. At this stage, challenges are defined as obstacles, difficulties, or problems.
2. This study reviewed African American men's challenges in pre-kindergarten classrooms. A study comparing African American women's challenges in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms could reveal more challenges both genders encounter.
3. Another recommendation involved the use of different research methodologies. Much of the research involved qualitative research, specifically case study and forms of narrative research. Future studies could incorporate methods of phenomenology and mixed methods.

### **Conclusion**

Having African American male teachers in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten is essential for all students, regardless of race. African American male teachers encounter many challenges daily, and hearing about them through interviews, focus groups, and letter writing is beneficial to mitigate these challenges to retain and recruit more Black males. Participants highlighted how

racism plays a significant role in the classroom and how coworkers and parents view them differently because they are Black males. Many participants mentioned they were in their schools to teach and make a difference and gender or skin color should not affect their treatment.

Teachers of color, particularly African American males, were in short supply while demand was high. As educational agents, it is their responsibility to address these issues and try to recruit persons of color to the profession.

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## APPENDICIES

### APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 25, 2022

Cherail Pollard  
Sharon Michael-Chadwell

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY21-22-811 A Multi-Case Study of the Challenges African American Male Teachers Encounter in the Early Childhood Classroom

Dear Cherail Pollard, Sharon Michael-Chadwell,

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 following date: April 25, 2022. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications 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(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) 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(s) should be made available without alteration.

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

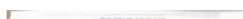
Sincerely,

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

**APPENDIX B: SITE APPROVAL**









**APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT LETTER**

Dear Teacher:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting a research project at [REDACTED] to meet the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my study is *A Multi-Case Study of the Challenges African American Male Teachers Encounter in the Early Childhood Classroom*. The purpose of this multi-case study is to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be African American males that teach pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete an electronic demographic questionnaire, participate in an audio- and video-recorded one-on-one interview via Teams, participate in an audio- and video-recorded focus group via Teams, and complete a letter-writing prompt. Participants will have the opportunity to review the transcript of their interview to check for clarity. It should take approximately two hours to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click on the link provided for the screening survey. If you are found to be eligible, I will contact you via email to sign the consent form.

If you choose to participate, once I have received your signed consent, I will send you the demographic survey link.

Please feel free to forward this invitation to any individuals you know who qualify and might be interested in participating in the study. If you have any questions before choosing to participate in the study, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

[Screening survey link]

<https://forms.gle/Nh2FzVEjjzNU5aCN9>

Sincerely,

Cherail Pollard  
Doctoral Candidate

## APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### Consent

**Title of the Project:** A Multi-Case Study of the Challenges African American Male Teachers Encounter in the Early Childhood Classroom

**Principal Investigator:** Cherail Pollard, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

#### Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an African American male pre-kindergarten or kindergarten teacher. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of this multi-case study is to understand the challenges African American male teachers face teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom.

#### 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. Complete a questionnaire that includes demographic information. This will take approximately 5-10 minutes.
2. Participate in an interview with the researcher. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be conducted virtually via Zoom. The interview will be audio- and-video recorded and transcribed.
3. Participate in a focus group with the researcher and other participants. The focus group will be conducted virtually via Zoom and be audio- and video-recorded and transcribed. The focus group will take approximately 1 hour.
4. Participants will have the opportunity to review their interview and focus group transcripts for accuracy.
5. Lastly, write a letter to a hypothetical recipient. The letter writing prompt will be "As a Black male early childhood teacher, what would you tell another prospective Black male about the challenges in the field?" The letter can be typed in a Word document and emailed to the researcher.

#### How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study

#### What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks associated with this study are minimal.

#### 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 anonymous. / Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of [pseudonyms/codes]. / Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be audio- and video-recorded and then transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be deleted after three years. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **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 is Cherail Pollard. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. S. Michael-Chadwell, at [REDACTED].

#### **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](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

#### **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- and video-record me as part of my participation in this study

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## **APPENDIX F: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

The purpose of this multi-case study is to understand the perceptions of African American male teachers on the challenges of teaching in the early childhood pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom.

1. Name:
2. Job Title/ Grade level:
3. What other grades have you taught?
4. How long have you been a teacher?

Demographic Survey Link

<https://forms.gle/S5CocfZDJhDU69oD6>

## **APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Research Questions**

#### **Central Research Question**

*What challenges do African American male early childhood teachers encounter in the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classroom?*

#### **Sub Question One**

*What racial challenges do African American males face in the early childhood classroom?*

#### **Sub Question Two**

*What cultural challenges do African American males face in the early childhood classroom?*

#### **Sub Question Three**

*What socio-economic challenges do African American males face in the early childhood classroom?*

### **Interview Questions**

1. Please describe your educational challenges in your current position. - CRQ
2. Describe the racial challenges you face in the early childhood classroom? SQ1
3. What are some strategies employed to address racial disparities encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ1
4. Would you like to provide any additional racial challenges that you have encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ1
5. Describe the cultural challenges you face in the early childhood classroom? SQ2
6. What are some strategies employed to address cultural disparities encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ2



7. Would you like to provide any additional cultural challenges that you have encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ2
8. Describe the socio-economic challenges you face in the early childhood classroom? SQ3
9. What are some strategies employed to address socio-economic disparities encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ3
10. What else would you like to add to our discussion of your experiences with lower SES students that we haven't discussed? SQ3
11. Would you like to provide any additional socio-economic challenges that you have encountered in the early childhood classroom? SQ3

**APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE*****Focus Group Questions***

1. Please introduce yourself to the group. General Question
2. Hearing the words Black male teachers, what are the thoughts that come to mind?  
CRQ
3. Why do you think Black male teachers face numerous challenges in the early childhood classroom? CRQ
4. What challenges do you consider the most critical that you faced in the classroom?  
SQ1, SQ2, & SQ3
5. Looking back into entering the teaching field, what challenges (racial, cultural, socio-economic) did you think you would face? Why? CRQ, SQ1, SQ2, &SQ3

**APPENDIX I: CODING**

1. Lack of material
2. Low-income
3. Parental Involvement
4. Culturally Inviting
5. Monetary Assistant
6. Behavior
7. Medication
8. Stereotype
9. Father not present
10. Scarce
11. Language Barrier
12. Health
13. Safety
14. Race
15. Delay

**APPENDIX J: AUDIT TRAIL**

| <b>Date</b>     | <b>Entry</b>   |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>04/25/22</b> | Received IRB approval  |
| <b>04/25/22</b> | Sent recruitment email seeking participants.   |
| <b>04/27/22</b> | Received responses from participants.  |
| <b>04/28/22</b> | Received signed consent letters from participants via DocuSign.  |
| <b>04/30/22</b> | Completed signed consent letters via from participants via DocuSign.   |
| <b>05/3/22</b>  | Conducted <i>Demographic Survey</i> via Survey Monkey.   |
| <b>05/5/22</b>  | Completed <i>Demographic Survey</i> via Survey Monkey.   |
| <b>05/11/22</b> | Began conducting video recorded interviews with selected participants via Teams.   |
| <b>05/15/22</b> | Concluded audio recorded interviews with all selected participants.  |
| <b>05/20/22</b> | After I completed each interview, I began transcribing using Teams and distributed those transcriptions to each corresponding participant for member-checking.   |
| <b>05/22/22</b> | Conducted an audio and video recorded focus group with selected participants.  |
| <b>04/25/22</b> | After I completed each focus group, I began transcribing using Teams and distributed those transcriptions to each corresponding participant for member-checking. |
| <b>05/07/22</b> | Reviewed all interview transcriptions for coding and thematic development.   |
| <b>05/21/22</b> | Received letter writing via email and hand delivery from all participants  |
| <b>05/25/22</b> | Color coded common themes from letter writing  |
|                 |  |

**APPENDIX K: OTHER DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

1. Interviews were conducted with all participants and recorded via Teams.
2. Demographic data were collected on all participants.
- 3, Common themes were vetted with participants and additional analysts for accuracy