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Lived Experiences of Selected African-American Male Elementary Teachers in Georgia

Chequita Franchon Brady

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**THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SELECTED AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE
ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN GEORGIA**

by

CHEQUITA FRANCHON BRADY

(Under the Direction of Cordelia Zinskie)

ABSTRACT

The supply and demand of teachers is constantly changing in the United States because they are steadily flowing in, through, and out of the educational profession (Ingersoll, 2002). Many educators and administrators are concerned about the shortage and underrepresentation of minority teachers in the profession such as African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and even males (Pytel, 2006). There is also an underrepresentation of African-American male elementary teachers. African-American male elementary teachers, a unique minority, are needed in the education profession to serve as role models earlier in the schooling process of young children, as well as to increase teacher diversity, which will represent the more diverse student population.

A qualitative research design was used to explore the lived experiences of selected African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia. Qualitative interviews were conducted with six African-American male elementary teachers who had taught at least five consecutive years at the elementary level in Georgia. Prior to the interviews, a pilot study was conducted to field test the interview protocol. In addition to the interviews, the six participants submitted a demographic profile instrument that was used

to gather other data. The interview responses were coded to find common themes and patterns.

The researcher's findings in the study noted common themes and patterns within the African-American males' lived experiences. Features that attracted African-American male elementary teachers to elementary education included: (1) service as role models, (2) opportunity to change careers, (3) the influence of family/friends/programs, and (4) the ability to make an early impact in students' lives. Barriers to becoming an African-American male elementary teacher included: (1) salary; (2) standardized testing; (3) students (academics/behavior); (4) acceptance/expectations; and (5) travel time/distance. Finally, contributions that African-American male elementary teachers perceived they were providing within the schools and their communities were comprised of: (1) role modeling; (2) mentoring; (3) relating/male talk; and (4) supporting.

INDEX WORDS: Male teachers, African-American male teachers, Minority teachers, Underrepresentation, Teacher shortage, Role models, Diversity

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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2008

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, especially my mother and father, Judy Herrington Brady and Thomas Lamar Brady. A special dedication also goes to my aunts, Annie Smith and Rosa Herrington. My family has supported me throughout my entire educational journey. During it all, they have advised me to keep God first and know that through Him all things are possible. They have been my sounding boards and my venting corners. No matter the circumstances, my family encouraged me to press forward, and they continuously provided the love and the guidance I needed to see me through this process. Although the journey was not easy, the end result meant the world to me. To my sisters, Fallon and Lequita, I hope I am an inspiration to you. Follow your dreams!

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost (1920)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

WANTED IMMEDIATELY: A SOBER diligent Schoolmaster capable of teaching READING, WRITING, ARITHMETICK, and the Latin TONGUE. The School is quite new, has a convenient Lodging Room over it, situated in a cheap Neighbourhood, and its Income estimated at between sixty and eighty Pounds a Year. Any Person qualified as above, and well recommended, will be put into immediate Possession of the School, on applying to the Minister of Charles Parish, York County (“Wanted Immediately...”, 1772).

The teaching profession has undergone dramatic changes over the past centuries since the preceding advertisement appeared in the Virginia Gazette in 1772. These changes have come in various forms and sizes, both sweeping and insignificant, which include moving from: teaching the bible to teaching the curriculum; using hornbooks to using technology; and testing basic skills to emphasizing performance based assessments. As conditions in society change, factors influencing the supply and demand of teachers are affected (Johnson, Dupuis, Musial, Hall, & Gollnick, 1996). Presently, schools across the country are experiencing a teacher shortage. According to Edvantia (2007), hard-to-staff schools are struggling to fill teaching vacancies with effective teachers. To add, *No Child Left Behind's* demand to place “highly qualified” teachers in every classroom by the 2005-2006 school term further complicated the teacher recruitment process (Education Trust, 2006). There has been a focus on recruiting teachers in critical subject areas and within certain geographical regions. The shortage and underrepresentation of minority teachers such as African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and males are of even greater concern for educators and administrators (Pytel, 2006). African American male elementary teachers, a unique minority, are especially needed to serve as role models earlier in the schooling process as well as to increase teacher diversity.

History of Men in Education

Education in America dates back to the Colonial era and was influenced by English, French, and Spanish settlers, all schooled in the established European traditions of the time (Webb, Metha, & Jordan, 2000). For two millennia, stated Webb et al., male European scholars such as Socrates, Quintilian and Comenius contributed to the development of the educational practices found in the early American educational system. However, Webb et al. also stated that the settlers of the New World brought with them diverse perspectives and ideas from their European heritage. As a result, colonists of the different regions, who did not share the same views on education, set up school systems that reflected their differences.

The New England colonies led the way for educational development in America. New England colonists instituted the first educational laws, the Massachusetts Law of 1642 and the Education Law of 1647, also known as *Ye Old Deluder Satan Law*, which served as models in the other colonies (Webb et al., 2000). In the early New England colonies, neighborhood women with little education themselves were employed to teach elementary children in town schools and dame schools (Beatty, 1995). Webb et al. noted that the middle colonists could not “agree on the establishment of any one system of state-supported schools” due to the diverse religions found within these colonies (p. 157). Therefore, elementary and secondary education in the middle colonies was limited and was operated as either private or denominational schools (Nichols & Good, 2000). Social class determined education in the southern colonies. Apprenticeships, “old field schools”, endowed schools, and charity/pauper schools provided elementary education for the less fortunate. Private elementary education, charging low fees, was afforded to children from

a range of social classes especially those with affluent backgrounds such as children of plantation owners and wealthy merchants (Beatty, 1995).

From the introduction of slavery (1661) throughout the first decade of the industrial revolution period (1885-1895), educational opportunities for African-Americans were either nonexistent or substandard; in addition, these opportunities were greater for free blacks, northerners, and city dwellers than for slaves, southerners, and rural people (Sacher, 2007). According to Woodson (2004), African-Americans received their education in three forms: masters who wanted to improve the efficiency of the economy; sympathizers who wanted to help the oppressed; and passionate missionaries who taught slaves in order for them to learn the Christian religion. W. E. B. Du Bois (1902) added:

And so, in this great question of reconciling three vast and partially contradictory streams of thought, the one panacea of Education leaps to the lips of all: such human training as will best use the labor of all men without enslaving or brutalizing; such training as will give us poise to encourage the prejudices that bulwark society, and stamp out those that in sheer barbarity deafen us to the wail of prisoned souls within the Veil, and the mounting fury of shackled men. (p. 3)

Yet, however different their backgrounds, from Colonial times throughout the mid 1800s, most teachers historically were young, white men (Spencer, 2000). Males were primarily responsible for the early education of children, especially boys, because men were said to be more literate than women during this period (Beatty, 1995).

School districts specifically recruited and hired male schoolmasters to head their schoolrooms (Skelton, 2001). Most of these males used teaching as a catalyst to obtain positions as ministers or lawyers (Spencer, 2000). Males teaching and having other jobs was not an uncommon occurrence (Grant & Murray, 1999). The men who decided to

continue their work as teachers, like their female counterparts, were said to be a captive labor force (Griffin, 1997).

During the mid 1800s and the Common School (public) movement of that time (1830-1865), reformers such as Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and Catherine Beecher toiled to make schools accessible for all American children, regardless of their religion or social class (Webb et al., 2000). Spencer (2000) reported that more and more public schools were being established, calling for more teachers to fill the teaching positions. Grant and Murray (1999) stated that the common school era also called for better teachers, thus launching formal teacher preparation institutes or normal schools. Mann, Barnard, and Beecher all “believed that the teaching force for the common schools should be female, not only because women supposedly made better teachers at the elementary level, but because they were less expensive to hire” (Webb et al., p. 197). Women were sometimes paid only a third of what men received. With the concept of more teacher-training and no increase in salary, teaching became less attractive to men (Grant & Murray, 1999). As time passed, women began to take the place of men in the teaching profession. The feminization of teaching began in the 1840s, and during the 1850s throughout the 1870s, the kindergarten movement favored women due to “their emotional capacity to love young children and their training in educational techniques thought to be linked to explicitly feminine types of behavior” (Beatty, 1995, p. 62). In contrast, the feminization of the African-American teaching force was much slower and did not take place until after 1890 (Fultz, 1995). However, by the twentieth century, women represented about 75% of America’s teaching workforce (Spencer, 2000).

Societal Changes

The twentieth century was characterized by social, economic, political, and educational changes in America. The majority of these changes could be attributed to the continuous growth in population. The United States population in 1900 was 76 million, and had grown to 275 million by the year 2000 (Pollina, 2003). Trends in immigration triggered the majority of this growth (Mirel, 2002; Pollina, 2003; Webb et al., 2000). Pollina and Webb et al. contended that this period was also marked by a rapid growth in transportation and communication, which opened new markets for growing industries. These growing populations and growing technological advancements initiated the rising need to educate the increased student-aged population, which in turn amplified the need for more teachers (Webb et al., 2000).

The purpose of education gradually changed as society continued to develop. According to Webb et al. (2000), the primary purposes of schooling are for students to: acquire knowledge and skills, compete in a global economy, and receive the transmitted cultural values of their society. These differing purposes of schooling have led to confusing structures that represent our schools in America today (Schelechy, 1990). Since the Common School era, the goal of public education has also been to assimilate and Americanize (Spencer, 2000), and to conform to the American way of life politically, socially, culturally, and religiously. Public schools were used to achieve this assimilation process (Mirel, 2002). However, by the 1960s “the concept of cultural pluralism replaced the assimilation concept” (Webb et al., p. 276). Mirel stated that after the Civil War, World War I, and Depression of the 1930s, programs were being implemented that acknowledged the contributions of diverse groups to American life. The multiculturalism

concept starting in the 1930s recognized, accepted, and affirmed human differences and similarities (Banks, 1997).

The family structure also changed over those decades. The once traditional or nuclear family was no longer the norm. The patriarchal family structure was on a decline (Beatty, 1995). During World War II, families changed dramatically and became more diversified, and women began to assume the dominant, breadwinning role in the family and workplace (Mander, 2001). Fathers became “largely absent figures without any responsibility for what happened inside the home” (Goodman & Martin, 2002, p. 26). Due to the increasing pattern of grandparents caring for their grandchildren, identifying individuals as ‘care givers’ instead of parents, became the norm (Mander, 2001).

Presently, “dual career families, single-parent families, ethnically and linguistically different families, and blended families are the norm rather than the exception” (Webb, et al., 2000, p. 244). Families and households of today are comprised of 67% of children living in families headed by two parents (both biological parents and others); 17.5% of children living in single parent families headed by their mothers; 4.5% of children living in single parent families headed by their fathers and about 11% of children living in households with neither parent present. In addition, 58% of children living in households without either parent lived with their grandparents (U.S Census Bureau, 2006).

As a result of the changes in today’s families, society has placed more responsibility on the educational system. The school has taken on the responsibility of teaching and providing programs that were traditionally the family’s obligation (Webb et al., 2000). Schools are providing services such as sex education, character education,

breakfast and lunch programs, counseling, mental health, and parent education programs. The educational system has transformed into a reactive body that tries to solve all of society's problems (Doyle, 2000; Spencer, 2000).

Need for Male Teachers

According to Burns and Bracey (2001), fathers have a greater influence on boys' and girls' behavior, attitudes and academic achievement than mothers; however, many fathers are not present in children's lives to make an impact. Schools today are reacting to the single parent and the absent father issues by trying to include more males in education (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; Cushman, 2005). The drive to recruit more male teachers, especially at the elementary level, has become a concern for many government agencies (Skelton, 2001, 2003). Foster and Newman (2005) as well as other researchers (Mills, 2000; Skelton, 2001) contended that young boys' self-esteem may be improved through a male teacher's attempt to empower them in the classroom. Providing a male teacher may also impact special education referrals, retentions and dropout rates, according to Garrahy (2001). Currently, there is a need for school systems to diversify the teaching profession (Carr, 2002). While schools are still seen as a feminine profession, male teachers are now needed to help boys' overcome their underachievement in the classroom and to provide balanced educational practices to make education more representative of society (Jones, 2003; Skelton, 2002).

According to Nelson (2002), male teachers are a minority among all teaching groups. Of the three million teachers in America's public schools today, under a quarter or 21% of them are men (Chemelynski, 2006; National Centers for Education Statistics: Fast Facts, 2005; National Centers for Education Statistics: Projections of Education

Statistics to 2015, 2006). Georgia Professional Standards Commission-Status Report: The Georgia Educator Workforce (2007) revealed that in the fall of 2007 the state of Georgia had 114,746 teachers, where 21,867 or 19.1% were male. Increasing the number of minority teachers could provide minority students with valuable role models from their own backgrounds and encourage a better response to these teachers who may have a more complete understanding of the students' families, neighborhoods, and general culture (Coeyman, 2000). In addition, Webb et al. (2000) stated that it was important for all children to see minorities in professional roles in order to represent and acknowledge their views, values, and culture.

Gender disproportionality among teachers is particularly noticeable at the elementary level, Kindergarten through sixth grades (Spencer, 2000). In 1993, Allan noted that men working within the K-6 grade levels primarily taught upper elementary students (4th-6th grade) or worked across grade levels in physical education, music, and art. The number of males teaching in elementary schools has decreased nationally since 1981 from 18% to 9%, 140,000 male elementary teachers of 1,480,000 elementary teachers today (National Center for Education Statistics: Special Analysis 2005 Mobility in the Teacher Workforce, 2005; NEA: National Education Association Male Teacher Fact Sheet, 2003).

Many men prefer not to teach in elementary schools primarily due to stereotypical assumptions by the public (Skelton, 2001). Stereotypical assumptions include a perceived lack of status, the fear of being falsely accused of inappropriate relationships with students, and the questioning of their maleness (Francis & Skelton, 2001). The perceptions of the public about male teachers and inappropriate behaviors toward young

children tend to frighten males away from the profession (Nelson, 2002). When men express tenderness or are warm and cuddly, they are considered to be “gay” or a pedophile (Scelfo, 2007). On the other hand, men who are overly masculine are seen as lacking those nurturing skills (Sumsion, 2000) needed to work with primary and elementary students. These stereotypes lead males to constantly adjust or think about their behaviors around students. Therefore, male elementary teachers tend to construct their masculinity through the use of disciplinary actions and seductive/flirtatious approaches toward the female gender (Francis & Skelton, 2001).

Colleges of education find it difficult to attract men into the profession because of the notion that teaching is women’s work (NEA: National Education Association Male Teacher Fact Sheet, 2003). Male elementary teachers primarily teach in the upper levels where managerial work is emphasized and opportunities to advance to administrative positions are favorable. Teaching at the upper levels of elementary and in secondary schools allows for greater physical and professional distances from students, which tend to be less emotional and less intrusive (Marston et al., 2005). These negotiations of masculinity impel men to seek employment in more lucrative fields that offer more opportunities and less discrimination (Grant & Murray, 1999; Skelton, 2001). However, the male elementary teacher is needed to provide another positive figure for students, especially boys, to relate and emulate.

The predominance of women teachers at the elementary level could lead boys to view academic success as feminine. However, the presence of a positive male role model could promote achievement associated with boys’ development (Brutsaert & Bracke, 1994; Skelton, 2001). The male role models available to many young boys today come

from their own neighborhoods and are oftentimes adults who are involved in drugs and crime (Allan, 1993). Skelton (2001) noted that “Boys are not starved for male role models, but they may be saturated in the negative” components of their perceived model, which may often discourage the achievement of these boys (p. 121).

The gender of a teacher may not affect teaching success, but its social implications give rise to a need to increase the number of male teachers in the elementary grades (Skelton, 2001). Students’ exposure to all sorts of role models would prove to be more beneficial to all students’ social development, as girls are provided the same advantages of having a male teacher such as diverse role models, teaching methods, and disciplinary actions (Milloy, 2003; Skelton, 2001). Milloy also asserted that men can be effective authority figures, can often talk to boys in ways that get their attention, and can bring about diverse perspectives that might enhance educational experiences for all students. This “male energy”, or male way, is characterized by a different teaching approach, an alternative authority figure, and a healthy role model.

Recruitment of African-American Male Teachers

Recruiting candidates who are highly qualified for teaching positions at the elementary level is crucial (Cooney & Bittner, 2001). However, the need to diversify the profession is also of importance. Today, students are becoming more and more diverse, both racially and culturally. Yet, the teaching profession remains unchanged and is not representative of the student population (Shure, 2001). According to the National Center for Education Statistics: Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Minorities (2007), minority students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools make up 42% of the schools' student population; in contrast, the schools' teaching population is

90% white. Buxton noted that the majority of students who exited out of K-12 academic programs never encountered an African-American teacher, specifically an African-American male. African-American men are considered the “missing links” in education (Buxton, 2000). School achievement increases for African-American students, as well as all students, when they experience an education where teachers understand their social and cultural needs (Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003).

Georgia’s statistics revealed nearly the same low percentage as our nation’s African-American males teaching in elementary schools. According to Mark Vignati who works in Data Collection and Reporting for the Georgia Department of Education (personal communication, October 8, 2007), as of November 2006, there were 58,391 teachers employed in Georgia’s elementary schools. Males overall comprised 6.94% of all Georgia’s elementary school teachers (4,050 of 58,391). Of those 4,050 male elementary teachers, 983 were black males (1.68% of the total teaching staff and 24.3% of the total male elementary teaching staff). Trends to diversify the education profession are important in the efforts to ensure that “students encounter teachers of similar racial or ethnic backgrounds” (Archer, 2000, p. 32). Providing a teaching force representative of the student population requires increased efforts by every school district to find innovative and creative ways to recruit (Doyle, 2000).

Many districts and colleges of education are searching for ways to recruit African-American teachers. Tapping into minority-serving institutions such as historically black colleges and universities, black communities, para-educators, and career changers might assist school districts, as well as colleges of education, in their efforts to recruit African-American males (Gursky, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Male teachers are disproportionately represented at the elementary level. There are even a smaller percentage of African-American male elementary teachers. However, male teachers, regardless of race, have been perceived as “positive” role models for both male and female elementary students, due to the lack of men prevalent in the lives and/or homes of many of these children. The rather small percentage, nine percent nationally, of male elementary teachers compels public school systems to recruit more men. However, many males prefer not to teach at the elementary level due to factors pertaining to stereotypical assumptions and low salaries.

Currently, there is an abundance of literature available pertaining to teachers and teaching; however, literature regarding male or African-American male elementary teachers is scarce. However, it is unclear if Georgia’s African-American male elementary teachers’ decisions to enter teaching, and remain in the profession differ from the rest of the teaching population. It is also unclear whether African-American male teachers perceive they contribute to the success of their students, co-workers, schools, and communities in which they work.

This exploration of the lived experiences of selected African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia was designed to help identify attractors to the teaching field and barriers that make it difficult for them to enter or remain in the profession, as well as perceptions of their contributions to elementary education. Identifying these factors may assist in recruiting and retaining more African-American male elementary teachers.

Research Questions

The overarching research question guiding this study was: What are the lived experiences of Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers?

The sub-questions that assisted in the research were:

1. What features attract African-American males in Georgia to teach at the elementary level?
2. What do Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers perceive are barriers for their becoming or remaining elementary teachers?
3. What perceptions do African-American males have about their contributions to elementary education in Georgia?

Significance of the Study

The researcher believes this study is important to the profession because the information obtained may help elementary principals and superintendents of schools become aware of the reasons why African-American males are attracted to elementary teaching, why they decide to remain in or leave the profession and their perceived contributions to elementary education. This information may be beneficial in educational administrators' attempts to recruit minority teachers, including the African-American males. The researcher's information could also be used by policy and other decision-makers to incorporate and implement recruiting and retention programs that would increase the number of African-American male teachers.

Educational administrators, including building principals, personnel directors and superintendents, as well as Colleges of Education could improve recruitment and retention of African-American male elementary teachers by collaborating and designing

recruiting initiatives targeting African-American males in African-American communities. The African-American community could benefit from having more African-American male teachers because the students, particularly African-American students, will encounter appropriate role models in the schools. The African-American community can be affected by African-American students' ability to receive a quality education and give back to the community what they have gained.

The topic was very important to the researcher because she has observed the impact of the underrepresented African-American male elementary teacher, particularly for the African-American students and specifically for the African-American male students. While working in an elementary setting, as a fourth grade teacher and an assistant principal, the researcher took notice of the race and gender inequities associated with teaching and wanted to learn more about the lack of African-American male elementary teachers.

Procedures

To explore the lived experiences of African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia, the researcher used the qualitative research design. In this qualitative research, semi-structured interviews and demographic profiles were used as data collection methods. To test the research questions, the researcher performed a pilot study. The analysis of the data in the research study included transcribing the audio taped interviews and searching for major themes and patterns throughout all the interviews.

Limitations

The use of a small purposeful sample limits the generalization of findings. The findings may not be generalized to all African-American males in Georgia's elementary schools.

Delimitations

The researcher has confined the method of data collection to interviewing selected African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia.

Summary

Male teachers, once dominating the profession, began to dwindle as society changed. Today, male teachers are needed to help diversify teaching, as well as to provide all students with opportunities to encounter appropriate role models, especially at the elementary level. Diversity among teachers provides various role models for all students. The more the teaching profession varies, the more it will reflect an even more varied classroom.

Presently, the majority of the men teaching in the public domain teach at the secondary level. Men teaching at the elementary level are rare. The number of African-American males teaching at this capacity is also marginal. Recruiting African-American males to teach at the elementary level is needed to reduce the disproportionate representation of teachers seen in today's public schools. The attractors and barriers to teaching at the elementary level as well as the perceived contributions to elementary education of the selected African-American male elementary teachers were explored.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Schools form children's opinions about the larger society and their own future. The race and background of their teachers tell them something about authority and power in contemporary America [influencing] their attitudes toward school, their academic accomplishments, and the views of their own and others' intrinsic worth. (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986, p. 79)

The purpose of this study was to collect, analyze, and report the lived experiences of African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia by studying their attractors and barriers to teaching at the elementary level, as well as their perceived contributions to elementary education. In this review, schools' perceived teacher shortage was first examined. Next, teacher diversity and recruiting initiatives were incorporated. Finally, the general supply and demand of the male teacher, reasons they were attracted to teaching, barriers that make it difficult for them to enter or remain in the profession, perceived contributions to education, and the need of the African-American male at the elementary level were discussed.

Teacher Shortage

For decades there has been a great demand to fill our nation's teaching vacancies. The repeated warning to hire at least two million teachers by 2008 (Bracey, 2002; Budig, 2006) and 3.5 million teachers by 2013 (Jolongo & Heider, 2006) has been a constant reminder of the "so-called" teacher shortage in elementary and secondary schools. According to The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2002), the crisis in teacher supply and demand is due to enrollment increases, teacher retirement, turnover, and career changes. However, Ingersoll (2005) stated that there is not an insufficient supply of qualified teachers in schools, but there is an increase in the number

of teachers leaving the profession prior to retirement, the “revolving door” phenomenon. “Holes in the Teacher Supply Bucket,” the title of Richard Ingersoll’s (2002) column in *The School Administrator*, is a significant analogy of how a large number of teachers flow in, through, and out of today’s schools. Therefore, elementary and secondary schools’ staffing difficulties are largely due to teacher turnover, either through teacher migration (movers) or teacher attrition (leavers) (Ingersoll, 2003).

Demographic Trends

Teacher turnover, particularly teacher attrition, is a dominant factor driving the demand for new teachers. Compared to other occupations, the turnover rate in the teaching field is 6% higher (Jalongo & Heider, 2006; The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2002). Recent statistics of teacher attrition include:

1. Thirty-three percent of all new teachers leave the profession during the first 3 years of their careers.
2. There is an annual attrition of 394,000 teachers.
3. The annual turnover of mathematics teachers (16.4%) is the highest of all subject areas; the rate for science teachers (15.6%) is second highest.
4. The rate of attrition is 50% higher in poor schools versus wealthy ones.
5. Shortages are most apparent in high-minority and high-poverty classrooms, where students are less likely to be taught by a teacher who is well-prepared in the subject area (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2006, p. 1).

The teacher shortage problem is more severe in certain geographical regions of the country, certain school districts, and in certain subject areas. The Progress of Education Reform (2000) stated that hard-to-staff fields such as mathematics, science, bilingual and special education in urban and rural schools, as well as out-of-field assignments and lack of minority teachers increased the problem of teacher supply, demand, and distribution. The National Centers for Education Statistics (2004) asserted that students in high-poverty and high-minority public high schools are often taught

mathematics, science, and English by out-of-field teachers, which is associated with students not proficiently learning the subject

The chronic attrition of beginning teachers in subject specific shortage areas creates a constant pressure to hire qualified educators. Consequently, teacher turnover, especially the turnover of math and science teachers, impacts student performances and the effectiveness of their educational opportunities (Patterson, Roehrig, & Luff, 2003). Students' limited interest in math and science challenges society's ability "to maintain intellectual vibrancy, to hire enough employees for highly-skilled positions and ultimately to ensure that our economy is globally competitive" (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2006, p. 1). Special education, like the other high-demand fields, experiences a high rate of attrition due to: 1) employment issues (salaries and certification); 2) working conditions (assignments, stress, and school climate); 3) personal issues (social, family, and relocation); 4) support (collegiality, supervisors, and staff development); 5) students (motivation, discipline, and progress); and 6) other factors (retirement and better jobs) (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007).

According to The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2002), there are problems attracting, distributing, and retaining teachers across regions, states or districts where shortages are linked to working conditions and salaries in those locations. Darling-Hammond (2001) cited The American Association of Employment in Education, which stated that there is a surplus of teachers in the northwestern, northeastern, Rocky Mountain, and Middle Atlantic regions, whereas there is a problem hiring and retaining teachers in the South and West regions due to low salaries and unacceptable working conditions. States and districts that offer higher wages, supportive

working conditions and geographic proximity to jobs contribute to the greater supply of teachers in shortage areas (Jacob, 2007).

Loeb, Darling-Hammond, and Luczak (2005) noted that there is a high turnover rate of teachers working in low-achieving, low-income, and high-minority serving schools. States and districts are hiring untrained teachers to solve the teacher shortage problem (Darling-Hammond, 2001). High occurrences of underprepared teachers are used to teach economically and educationally disadvantaged students in urban and rural schools (Business-Higher Education Forum, 2006). To add, noted Brownell, Hirsch, and Seo (2004), hiring uncertified teachers who are not trained to handle conditions such as curriculum development, teaching methods, classroom management, and student motivation in poor rural and urban areas are further magnifying the attrition problem.

Jacob (2007) asserted that the more qualified teachers choose to teach in more desirable, affluent schools with a lesser rate of poverty and minority students. The reasons rural districts are faced with the difficulty of securing and retaining teachers are attributable to “the remote locations of the schools, lack of social and cultural activities typically associated with larger urban and suburban districts, and insufficient resources for salaries and professional development” (Brownell, Bishop, & Sindelar, 2005, p. 10). Ingersoll’s (2003) data report in “Is There Really a Teacher Shortage?” showed that the turnover rates for high-poverty and urban public schools are far higher than the turnover rates in the more affluent public schools and slightly higher than suburban, as well as rural, public schools. The Business-Higher Education Forum (2006) report revealed that the attrition rate of teachers leaving poor schools is actually 50% higher than the rate of teachers leaving wealthy schools.

No Child Left Behind and the Highly Qualified Teacher

The demands of the federal education law, *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, to hire highly qualified teachers in order to ensure that all students encounter well-qualified teachers and experience an effective educational program benefits the system's intent to improve teacher quality, yet it also provides challenges. The intent of the law to address the unfair assignment of underprepared and inexperienced teachers to schools serving the most disadvantaged students is an important aspect of *NCLB*. The minimum standards set by the law include:

- All teachers must meet state certification requirements and have a license;
- All teachers must have at least a college degree; and
- All teachers must demonstrate that they are knowledgeable in each subject they are assigned to teach (The Education Trust, 2006).

No Child Left Behind has sent a signal that teacher recruitment and retention are important in regards to reducing the teaching quality gap (Center for Teaching Quality, 2007).

The title of Kenneth Goodman's article in *Education Week* (2007), "NCLB Law's Quality Rules Worsen Teacher Shortage", signified that *No Child Left Behind* has had a negative impact on recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. The teacher quality provision of *No Child Left Behind* established measures of accountability that brought highly effective teachers to urban districts, but the provision has also allowed for other means for teachers to demonstrate their competence, which may circumvent the intent of the law (Jacob, 2007). Brownell et al. (2005) stated that the more stringent requirements of *NCLB*, particularly the prohibition of emergency and provisional certifications, made it more difficult to recruit and retain teachers in rural districts due to the inflexibilities of the law. The demands of *NCLB* also created an inability to employ enough highly

qualified special education teachers because the accountability issues have forced these teachers to either produce “proficient” special education students, leave the position for a job as a regular education teacher, or leave the profession altogether (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007). *No Child Left Behind* has impacted the recruitment and retention of teachers in urban and rural districts, as well as in hard-to-staff areas, such as the special education field.

Efforts to Recruit

The issues of supply, demand, and quality of teachers have led to unequal educational outcomes for children from poor, disadvantaged communities. In attempts to increase the supply of qualified teachers, initiatives to recruit new teaching candidates are utilized. Ingersoll (2005) said there are several pathways to teacher education including: “Troops-to-Teachers,” Teach for America, alternative teacher certification programs, and “grow-your-own” approaches, which search for candidates who are working out-of-field, paraprofessionals, second-career adults, high school students, and candidates from other countries. Financial incentives including loan forgiveness programs and scholarships are also provided in the attempts to recruit and retain qualified teachers (NEA: Tomorrow’s Teacher, 2002). However, Ingersoll argued that increasing the number of teachers in education will not solve the staffing problem if the new recruits continued to leave within a five-year period. Therefore, intentional and aggressive methods of recruitment and retention are needed to solve the teacher shortage problem.

Troops-to-Teachers is established to recruit, prepare, and support former military personnel to serve disadvantaged students in high-poverty schools; to relieve shortages in math, science, special education, and other critical subject areas by placing the candidates

in subject areas compatible with their background, not out-of-field; and to assist troops to make a transition to a second career (Department of Defense Department of Education, 2007; Troops-to-Teachers, 2007). Committed to diversity, the Teach for America program is selective in its attempt to attract the best and most effective candidates to advance the program's cause of impacting student academic achievement (Teach for America, 2006). A survey was conducted by the National Center for Education Information (2007) that revealed that alternative routes to certification have benefited many candidates by increasing their opportunities to become teachers. This program draws on the diversity of individuals with backgrounds in needed subject matters. To extend career pathways from high schools to community colleges to universities, the three educational programs have joined together to address the teacher shortage (Bragg, 2007; Ignash & Slotnick, 2007). Zirkle, Brenning, and Marr (2006) stated that a true "2+2" or "2+2+2" model like the one developed between Ohio State University and Columbus State Community College fosters a linkage between the different levels of education by exposing these students to teacher education prior to entering a 4-year college or university, and developing transfer opportunities throughout the teacher education process and into the teaching workforce. Various models and programs to recruit teachers are needed to increase teacher diversity.

Why Attracted to Teaching

Teachers are integral factors in the viability of society (Webb et al., 2000). Educators are continuously faced with various cultural, social, and political issues; therefore, initiatives such as increasing teacher recruitment efforts, education and professional development, and accountability are incorporated into the process

(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004). Regardless of the various issues teachers encounter, many people are still interested in becoming teachers.

According to Cookson (2005), men and women entered the profession in order to ensure a better society and to serve children by fully maximizing their talents, imagination, analytical skills, and character, in addition to taking long vacations. In Jarvis and Woodrow's (2005) research, 483 students from different disciplines decided to enter teacher training because they had a love for children, they believed they were destined to teach, they wanted a change in career, the profession provided a stable career for them, and the subjects they had chosen to teach were enjoyable. Men and women, career changers or not, are attracted to the field of education because they believe the job allows them to serve the community, and is a profession that presents more stability and security than previous occupations held (Priadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003).

Parsons (2003) stated that all people are different; therefore, individual reasons to enter the field of education will also be dissimilar. According to several researchers (Cooney & Bittner, 2001; McCray, Sindelar, Neal, & Kilgore, 2002; Younger, Brindley, Pedder, & Hagger, 2004), many women and men decided to become teachers because family members, community and church leaders influenced their decisions. They also found that teacher candidates desired to maintain their cultural values and customs, believed teachers influenced the success or failure of their students, were engaged in a positive educational experience, were seeking a fast track and/or early promotion to higher positions, and were in the right place and time for a career change.

There are many reasons people offer for why they decide to become teachers. The reasons for wanting to teach have included making a difference in society, being a role

model, providing continuous learning for students as well as themselves (Parsons, 2003), and obtaining fringe benefits such as Social Security, worker's compensation, health and hospitalization insurance, short and long-term disability (Webb et al., 2000), as well as other financial incentives such as fee waivers, scholarships, and forgivable loans (McKenzie, 2004).

Quest for Diversity

The teaching profession is predominately characterized by young white, female teachers with an increasingly minority student population. The majority of the 3.2 million teachers in the United States' teaching workforce was female in the 2003-2004 school year: a total of 2,528,000 (79%) women to 672,000 (21%) men (National Centers for Education Statistics: Projections of Education Statistics to 2015, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2006); at the elementary level 1,340,000 (91%) public and private school teachers were female and 140,000 (9%) were male; the average age of new teachers was 29 years old; of all school teachers, 29% were under 35 years old, 42% were between 35 and 49 years old, and 29% were 50 years or older; the majority of teachers, about 53%, held a bachelor's degree, 42% attained a master's degree, and 4% attained a doctorate, professional, or education specialist degree during the 1999-2000 school term (National Center for Education Statistics: Special Analysis, 2005).

While only 17 % of public school teachers are racial/ethnic minorities, National Centers for Education Statistics (2007) revealed that in 2004, minority students made up 42% of the nation's public prekindergarten through secondary school enrollment. The predominately white teaching force is not representative of today's diverse student population (Shure, 2001). According to NEA: Tomorrow's Teachers (2002), although we

live in a multicultural society, our schools remain segregated and in need of a diverse teacher workforce, where these role models can teach students early how to thrive and cooperate in a multicultural environment. In order for the profession to be more representative of students, there needs to be more ethnic minority and male teachers (White & Smith, 2005).

A Need for Male Teachers

Male teachers are in high demand in America's public schools as an emphasis is placed on the need to diversify the profession and a need for more male role models. Twenty-one percent of the entire teaching force and nine percent of the elementary teaching force are males (National Centers for Education Statistics: Special Analysis, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Including more minorities such as males in teaching, may assist in diversifying the teaching field. Cooney and Bittner (2001) stated that a diverse teaching force provides balance. Jones (2003) and other researchers (Rice & Goessling, 2005) contended that male teachers are needed to serve as role models, for out of control boys in particular, and to serve as advocates for more males to enter the profession.

Male teachers, another minority, are also needed to impact the academic success of students, especially male students. Pollack (1999) contended that schools generally do not have the curricula or teaching methods designed to meet specific needs and interests of male students. Therefore, male students are more apt to school failure. Garrahy (2001) asserted that boys' academic performance is influenced by their behavior, which may impact special education referral, retention, and dropout rates. Boys receive 70% of Ds and Fs; represent 90% of discipline referrals; account for two-thirds of learning disability

diagnoses; and are 80% of the high school dropouts (Gurian & Stevens, 2004). Boys are also 50 percent more likely than girls to be retained and account for 71 percent of all school suspensions (Hunsader, 2002). In addition, Ferguson (2005) stated that the lack of men in the classroom affects the motivation of boys who are performing poorly academically, most pronounced in literacy skills. According to a case study project in the United Kingdom, low literacy levels were related to boys' underachievement (Burns & Bracey, 2001). Similarly, African American students' underachievement was also most evident in literacy skills (Jackson, 2005). The mere presence of males in the classroom may not improve students' academic performances; however, their presence may provide models similar in race and gender, as well as to demonstrate that males can also aspire to become teachers (Rice & Goessling, 2005).

Although there is a need to diversify and recruit more male teachers, Johannesson's (2004) study of 14 women teachers in several Icelandic primary schools found that boys and girls have natural differences in the way they learn, as well as a difference between the way men and women teach. According to Francis, Skelton, Carrington, Hutchings, Read, and Hall (2008), recruiting male elementary teachers to challenge boy's underachievement and improve their engagement has been rejected by students who stated that the importance of gender in student-teacher relations and learning outcomes are irrelevant, and the abilities of the individual teacher needs to be highlighted.

Need For Males at the Elementary Level

Primary and elementary schools are crucial in the development stage of children, in particular males (Cushman, 2005). According to Smedley and Pepperell (2000), at this

stage, the concept of care is used to build trusting relationships between the teacher and students. Rice and Goessling (2005) insisted that students, in particular elementary students, never come in contact with male figures in schools unless through the limited interactions with principals, janitors, or coaches. Male teachers are needed to foster positive attitudes and enhance the status of elementary education by increasing the numbers of males (Skelton, 2003).

Males choosing elementary teaching as a career perceived this level as needing and valuing “maleness” or male models, as not exclusively for women, and as a means of confronting negative stereotypes (Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999). Foster and Newman’s (2005) study revealed that equal access and a balanced teaching force is desirable, but increased masculine presence showed no evidence of positively affecting behavior and motivation of disengaged and underachieving boys. Nevertheless, men intending to teach in primary schools were confident about their masculinity, and were essential in fostering positive attitudes and socialization skills among all students, primarily boys, and were perceived as appropriate role models (Skelton, 2003).

The presence of a male primary school teacher can also be beneficial in the quality of boys’ academic achievement and self-esteem. Exposing children in elementary school and throughout their educational lives to different beliefs and attitudes, move the student to understand what it takes to be the right kind of man at an earlier age (Canada, 2000). There is an assumption that male teachers at the primary level provide positive role models for boys aspiring to become teachers (Skelton, 2003). Cooney and Bittner’s (2001) analysis of issues relating to men in early childhood education showed that children, particularly males, take more interest in the male teacher by exhibiting signs of

enthusiasm and a willingness to participate in feminine activities simply because the teachers teaching the activities are male.

A Need for Minority Teachers, Especially the African-American

The minority teacher shortage has led to a need to recruit more teachers of color. Duarte (2000) contended that the reason there are so few minority teachers at the elementary and secondary level is because minority students tend to drop out of school, never enter college, or are lured to more lucrative fields after graduation. To add, Rodney, Crafter, Rodney, and Mupier (1999) contended that the African-American male population, a unique minority, represents a disproportionately higher dropout rate than those of other ethnic and gender groups. African-American boys at the elementary level are also more often retained than any other ethnic and gender groups (Rodney et al., 1999). Frustrations and difficult school experiences among these African-American students and other students of color may than result in an increase in school dropout (Daniel, Walsh, Goldston, Arnold, Reboussin, & Wood, 2006). Osborne (1999) contended that as African-American boys move through the educational system they are more likely to become disidentified.

Minority teachers, particularly African-American teachers, are needed to serve as role models for all students to inspire them to achieve; to reflect the composition of the racial population being served; and to reassure minority people who are distrustful of the educational system that there are still some trustworthy minorities in the system to help them (Bariso, 2001). A qualitative case study by Cooper (2003) of three White public primary school teachers found that in regards to teaching, there is no difference between African-American and Caucasian teachers except in the areas surrounding race and

racism. Irvine and Foster (1995) asserted that the best teachers of African-American students share the community's beliefs relating to racial socialization including values such as discipline, resilience, achievement, and hard work.

Teachers, one of the central figures in the socialization process, have substantial control over the transmission of culture to students (Webb et al., 2000). Therefore, minority students such as the African-American child need to encounter points of views similar to their own, not just from White mainstream (Milner, 2005). The National Education Association: Tomorrow's Teacher (2002) asserted that when teachers of color are not available, minority students, like African-American students, are more frequently placed in special education classrooms, and are absent more from school. African-American and other minority teachers offer experiences, expectations, and teaching practices that non-minority teachers may not (McCray, Sindelar, Neal, & Kilgore, 2002).

Recruitment Initiatives

Colleges and universities, specifically minority serving institutions, play a crucial role in recruiting and producing more minority teachers. Furthermore, minority-serving institutes produce almost half of all minority teaching degrees, but the under-funded programs have been linked to students' performance on the SAT and other standardized tests (Gehring, 2000). Gallegos (2000) stated that college degrees held by people of color are scarce; however, the ones holding degrees are considered a precious commodity in the education profession. Gallegos noted while the number of minority college graduates is increasing, teaching is not a profession these graduates are gravitating toward. The researcher also stated that attracting and recruiting more minority and male teachers to

teacher-preparation programs is needed to effectively prepare minority role models in addition to providing cultural translators for minority students.

Recruitment initiatives aimed at attracting minority teachers have incorporated a variety of programs geared toward increasing the number of minorities, including African-American, Hispanic, male, and language minority students. The University of Southern California started the Latino and Language Minority Teacher Project (LLMPT) to increase this group of minorities' presence in the teaching profession.

Paraprofessionals were recruited and provided financial, social, and academic support to become bilingual teachers. In partnership with four colleges and universities in the greater Los Angeles area, five Los Angeles County Schools, the county office of education, and the major labor unions representing paraprofessionals and teachers, the pathway to teaching project consisted of a sequential induction process, four phases of the developmental stage, financial assistance, academic and social support, and professional development support (Gensuk & Baca, 1998).

The Call Me Mister training program in South Carolina seeks to recruit African-American males into elementary education. MISTER stands for Men Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models (Richard, 2005). Often hearing of the program in high schools, recruits learn values, leadership skills, mentoring and how to be role models, dedicating themselves to change the lives of other African-American males (Norton, 2005). Smiles (2002) stated that tuition assistance is offered to program participants along with social and cultural support systems to sponsor MISTER's success in helping African-American male students.

Many colleges are working with mentoring programs and school districts in efforts to recruit minorities, especially men. Men for Excellence in Elementary Teaching, a recruitment program launched by Professor Roy F. Fox at the University of Missouri-Columbia, was designed to recruit more male teachers in elementary schools through a mentoring network combined with financial incentives (Diverse: Issues in Higher Education, 2005). The Men Equipped to Nurture program is another program directed at helping male teachers earn full certification by providing financial incentives of paying for classes and exam fees. Prince George's County Schools in Maryland teamed up with Bowie State University in an effort to confront the shortage of African-American men teaching in public schools (Perry, 2005). Project MODEL (Males of Diversity Exhibiting Leadership) is a program at Bethune-Cookman College created to train black men as elementary and preschool special educators (Basinger, 1999).

African-American Male Teachers

African-American male teachers constitute only 1% of the United States teaching workforce, while black students constitute 20% of the school population (Lewis, 2006). African-American male teachers' presence is important for all students, especially African-American boys, due to the fact that many of these black, male students are from single parent, female headed households (Taylor, 2003). Throughout their educational experience, many boys have never come into contact with a male teacher (Guardian, 2007). African-American male teachers, seen as a reference group to many African-American male students, are needed in the schools to help them achieve identity development based on nationality, skin color, common history and oppression, and ancestry (Thompson & Akbar, 2003).

The observance of successful African-American males can provide the African-American male student with a positive educational experience, which can influence their sense of identity (Corbin & Pruitt, 1999). Therefore, “African American youth may benefit from embracing their cultural identity instead of trying to conform to Western notions of individualism in identity formation.” (Whaley, 2003, p. 111) Taylor (2003) emphasized that the presence of African-American teachers, especially African American male teachers, positively impacts boys’ self-concept and academic achievement. A longitudinal study of 80 youths by Zirkle (2002) revealed that students with at least one race- and gender-matched role model performed better academically, enjoyed activities related to achievement, reported goals that were related to achievement, and thought about their futures more, and looked up to adults rather than peers more than those students without a race- and gender-matched role model. According to Warikoo (2004), teachers can connect and teach students who share their socio-economic status, race, and ethnicity. However, it has also been established that those who have different life experiences and perspectives bring different strengths in the classroom and connect with different facets of students’ lives (Warikoo, 2004). Recruiting targeted populations such as race- and gender-matched representatives may provide mentors, advocates and inspirational figures who share similar life experiences that may contribute to breaking down racial and gender stereotypes (Carrington & Skelton, 2003).

Contributions to Education

The perceptions of contributions to education can encompass both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, which can influence African-American males’ decisions to enter and remain in the teaching profession. “Black men see teaching as an opportunity to correct

social, political, and even economic barriers” (Lynn, 2006, p. 239). College educated black males are few; therefore, African-American male teachers are needed throughout the educational pipeline to function as firm disciplinarians, to help improve African-American students’ test scores, and to illustrate “real” role models (Lewis, 2006). Therefore, “the presence of committed and successful African-American male adults in teaching and leadership roles is essential for enhancing Black male youths’ academic and social development” (Brown & Butty, 1999, p. 282). In addition, African-American male role models have been found to exercise more control over young African-American male students because these young black men are seeking these role models’ attention and approval (Taylor, 2003).

The presence of more role models that are successful in teaching and leadership may influence the male student, especially the black male student. Due to the fact that young black boys in primary grades rarely see men involved in school work or school activities, these young men are reluctant to participate in learning activities like singing the “A-B-C” song because it deviates from their need to appear masculine (Allan, 1993; Holland, 1996). Thus, Spencer Holland (1996) initiated Project 2000 because he believed young Black boys needed and benefited from seeing and working with adult males in school settings, especially at the primary level. According to Taylor (2003), the objective of Project 2000 was to prevent the development of negative attitudes toward the school environment and to promote high levels of academic achievement among African-American males in the primary grades by incorporating male role models in these students’ daily school experiences.

The results of Rhonda Wells-Wilbon and Spencer Holland's (2001) exploratory study of social learning theory and the influence of male role models on a group of 55 African-American children in Project 2000 were congruent with Holland's goals and objectives of decreasing negative attitudes toward school and promoting high levels of academic achievement among African-American males. The adult role models assisted with teaching basic skills, managing discipline problems, instilling positive values, and increasing the young African-American male's desire to want to do the right thing even in the absence of the role model. Project 2000 students had significantly higher GPAs and test scores than did the students in the control group for second, third and fourth grade students in mathematics, reading, language arts, and spelling. More than 85% of the boys in Project 2000 were at or above grade level in almost every subject tested, while 85% of boys in the control group were below grade level (Wilbon & Holland, 2001). Hence, male teachers are desired to improve boys' academic and behavioral success.

In accordance with the social learning theory, when students observe and emulate the thinking and actions of role models, learning is enhanced (Elzubeir & Rizk, 2001). However, children do not automatically imitate models they see, but if a rapport is established with the teacher, consequences are reinforced, and appropriate settings for modeling certain behaviors are determined, then modeling may occur at any time throughout the curriculum at random (Taylor, 2003). The African-American student may look to same race role models for information about how to negotiate stereotypes, being a minority, or how to cope with consequences associated with stereotypes and minority awareness (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004). When an African-American male role model

is incorporated into the educational process of the African-American male child, their self-esteem and academic achievement will most likely improve (Taylor, 2003).

Barriers to Teaching

There is a lack of African-American males working in the educational system. Okezie (2003) believed the poor academic preparation minority students received throughout their schooling years is one of the main reasons there are so few African-American male teachers in the teaching force. Due to the inadequate preparation obtained by the African-American male, the requirement to pass standardized examinations to show they are qualified to receive a teacher certification (Lewis, 2006) hinders their success. Low compensation, stated Rice and Goessling (2005), is another barrier to becoming a teacher because jobs in other fields may be more profitable. African-American males have the same barriers to teaching as other male teachers such as fears of accusations of abuse and feelings of isolation.

Summary

The teacher shortage dilemma has placed a great demand on states and districts to hire more qualified teachers. As a large number of teachers flow in, through, and out of schools, the need to reduce the teacher attrition rate was of high priority. *No Child Left Behind* was designed to ensure that all students encounter well-qualified teachers. The law established measures of accountability to reduce the teacher quality gap; however, provisions in the law have caused problems in urban and rural districts, as well as for special education teachers. The issues of supply, demand, and quality of teachers have led to unequal educational outcomes.

Minority teachers, including male teachers, are needed to combat the under representation of minority teachers in the educational system and to provide a diverse group of role models for all students. At the elementary level, male teachers are desired to capture and maintain the attentions of boys. At this age, the presence of male teacher role models, including the African-American male teacher, benefits the academic attainment of the male student, particularly the African-American male student. There is a short supply of African-American male elementary teachers, but the demand is greater.

Intentional and aggressive methods of recruitment are needed to solve the teacher shortage problem, especially for minority teachers. Various models and programs to recruit and retain teachers are needed to increase teacher diversity. In order to be more representative, the profession needs more ethnic minority and male teachers to serve as role models, reflect racial composition of the served population, and decrease distrustful attitudes toward the educational system. In addition, the male teacher is also needed to advocate for more males to enter the profession.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia by studying their attractors and barriers to teaching at the elementary level and their perceived contributions to elementary education. The issues of teacher diversity and boys' assumed underachievement has warranted a need for more minority teachers, specifically African-American male teachers, earlier in the academic continuum. African-American male teachers are preferred to help reduce the minority teacher shortage in hard-to-staff areas and to provide appropriate role models for all students. The reasons why African-American male teachers decided to become educators and remain in the field are ideal to assist in the recruiting and retention of this population, as well as to increase teacher diversity. This chapter includes details regarding the research design, participants, instrumentation, and a pilot study that was conducted prior to the research, data collection and data analysis procedures.

The overarching research question guiding this study was: What are the lived experiences of Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers?

The sub-questions that assisted in the research were:

1. What features attract African-American males in Georgia to teach at the elementary level?
2. What do Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers perceive are barriers for their becoming or remaining elementary teachers?

3. What perceptions do African-American males have about their contributions to elementary education in Georgia?

Procedures

Research Design

Research is conducted for the purposes of exploring, analyzing, describing, explaining, or evaluating, in order to gain a deeper understanding of issues, arrive at informed decisions, and make predictions (Nardi, 2003). Qualitative research inquiry was used to explore the lived experiences of selected African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia. According to Mason (2002), the qualitative approach is flexible and exploratory. The qualitative research design is used to analyze significant statements, generate meaning, and develop descriptions that reveal the essence of the context (Creswell, 2003; Wolcott, 1990). The qualitative design also focuses on understanding the social setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and focuses on the phenomenon within the real world context (Bean, 2006).

With qualitative research, the researcher seeks to understand a topic that has not been fully examined (Creswell, 2003). Interviews are “used to obtain in-depth information about a participant’s thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations, and feelings about a topic, which assisted in the understanding of that person’s perspectives” (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 144). Interviews are the most appropriate data collection method to answer the research questions for this study because this process provides access to lived experiences, thereby allowing the researcher an opportunity to put those experiences into context and to understand actions (Seidman, 2006).

This design focuses on in-depth interactions (Glesne, 1999) with African-American male elementary teachers in order to understand attractors, barriers and perceived contributions to elementary teaching. This qualitative research allows the researcher to understand the participants' interpretation of thoughts, feelings, and actions (Seigle, ND) to obtain specific views for attracting and retaining African-American male teachers to elementary education. Other gender and racial groups were eliminated from the study because they are not able to provide specific experiences of African-American male elementary teachers.

Population

According to Mark Vignati, Data Collection and Reporting for the Georgia Department of Education (personal communication, October 8, 2007), there were 983 African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia during the 2006-2007 school term, which represented 1.68% of Georgia's total teaching force and 24.3% of male elementary teachers. African-American male teachers teaching at the elementary level were limited, but they were the best population to answer the research questions because they were able to report actual experiences of being an African-American male elementary teacher.

Participants

The research participants were selected based on a purposeful selection method designed to identify six African-American male elementary teachers currently teaching in Georgia. To be considered for inclusion in study, participants must have taught at the elementary level for at least five consecutive years in Kindergarten through sixth grade. Identification of this group was obtained through networking groups, referrals from

colleagues, or administrative recommendations. This selection approach is useful in obtaining the “information needed to address the purpose of the research” (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 180) from those who best know and understand the African-American males’ experiences in elementary schools. The six African-American male elementary teachers were willing to participate in order to provide insight about their experiences as African American male elementary teachers. The participants and their elementary schools were identified by pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity.

Instrumentation

Prior to the implementation of the research study, the researcher obtained written consent from the potential participants by providing information that informed them about the study. A cover letter (see Appendix A) and consent form (see Appendix B) were used, which included the purpose, intent and importance of the study. Participants were also notified of procedures and conditions of their participation. A demographic profile instrument (see Appendix C) was developed to assist in obtaining information about the participant and his teaching setting prior to the interview.

The researcher interviewed six African-American male elementary teachers using a semi-structured, qualitative, interview approach. The interview questions (see Appendix D) were designed to explore the lived experiences of African-American male elementary teachers based on the literature reviewed pertaining to attractors, barriers, and contributions to education. The researcher’s task was to build upon and explore the responses to the interview questions and reconstruct experiences (Seidman, 2006). In this case, the researcher was able to explore African-American males’ experiences as they pertain to their role as elementary teachers.

Pilot Study

After IRB approval (see Appendix E), a pilot study of two African-American male elementary teachers from the target population was conducted to test and revise interview questions (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). A pilot test was performed prior to the actual study to analyze the interview questions regarding clarity, appropriateness, and omissions. The purpose of a qualitative pilot study was to learn about the research process and the interview questions' length and language before going into the real study (Glesne, 1999). Pilot study interviews took place in the teacher's classroom or at the participant's home. Both interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. Based on the pilot study, participants gave feedback on questions and process. Adjustments to the questions and process were not made; therefore, the results of the pilot study were used in the actual study.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a demographic profile instrument and through semi-structured interviews, which were used to uncover and explore the lived experiences of selected African American male elementary teachers. According to Mason (2002), interviews allow for purposeful interaction, theme development, and understanding meaning. The consent form and demographic profile instrument were sent along with a stamped, self-addressed return envelope to ensure that potential participants returned the signed and completed forms, which granted permission to proceed in the research study. Participants were also allowed to fax the consent forms and demographic profile instruments back to the researcher. After receipt of the returned informed consent and demographic profile forms, a phone call was made or an e-mail was sent to verify the

consent, and interview dates and times were arranged. The researcher scheduled the interviews with the selected African-American male elementary teachers at a time and location most convenient for them.

During the face-to-face semi-structured interview, interviewees were asked 20 questions that explored the African-American males' experiences as elementary teachers. The same questions were asked in the same order to ensure validity of the study. At times, additional questions were asked to ascertain more information that clarified information that was vague, omitted, or unclear. Designed to improve knowledge, this conversational interaction between researcher and participant (Wengraf, 2001) explored factors attracting African-American males to teach elementary education, as well as explored their perceived contributions to the field, barriers, and their need at the elementary level. All interviews conducted were tape recorded with the agreement of the participant. Audio recordings preserve the words of the interview and assure accountability from the original data by tracing the interview data of the interview tapes throughout all stages of the research (Seidman, 2006). Confidentiality of tape-recorded conversations was affirmed.

Data Analysis

After each interview, audiotapes were labeled for identification and transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts in conjunction with audiotapes were examined to assure accuracy and integrity of the transcription process. Marshall and Rossman (1999) asserted that the analysis of data brings "order, structure, and interpretation" to data collected (p. 150).

The data from the study were analyzed to answer the overarching research question: What are the lived experiences of Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers? Qualitative data analysis involves organizing data; generating categories, themes, and patterns; and testing emergent hypotheses that reduces data into manageable segments, bringing meaning to words (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The researcher read each transcript and color coded the common themes and patterns identified.

Summary

The researcher explored the lived experiences of African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia. Using face-to-face interviews, this qualitative research design focused on real world phenomenon and in-depth interactions. A pilot study of two participants was performed to test and clarify interview questions. Four more African-American male teachers were elicited to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interview guide consisted of 20 questions. The interviews took place in locations specified by the participants: homes or classrooms. The researcher transcribed each interview and read over them for clarity. Audiotapes were filed and stored for security. The interviews were coded to find common themes and patterns in the interviews.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The lived experiences of selected African-American male elementary teachers were explored in order to understand attractors, barriers and perceived contributions to teaching the elementary level. The researcher examined six African-American male elementary teachers who have taught for at least five consecutive years in Georgia's Kindergarten through sixth grades. In-depth interviews of the respondents were conducted to gain insight about their experiences teaching at the elementary level.

The overarching research question guiding this study was: What are the lived experiences of Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers?

The sub-questions that assisted in the research were:

1. What features attract African-American males in Georgia to teach at the elementary level?
2. What do Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers perceive are barriers for their becoming or remaining elementary teachers?
3. What perceptions do African-American males have about their contributions to elementary education in Georgia?

This chapter contains an analysis of the data collected through in-depth interviews conducted with six of Georgia's 983 African-American male elementary teachers. The qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to gather actual accounts of experiences as African-American elementary teachers. A pilot study of two African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia was conducted to test and revise the

interview questions. Both respondents thought the questions were suitable and fair for future use on other participants. Prior to the interview, the researcher informed the participants of their responsibility to help improve the research questions. All questions were appropriate and the two pilot study participants' responses were used in the actual study. All of the participants were asked the same questions to assure validity and reliability of given responses. Several follow-up questions were used to probe participants' responses for more information when not provided, not clear, or during brief accounts. Transcripts of tape-recorded interviews were coded and securely stored.

Demographic Profiles

Anthony

Anthony, age 48, has taught 6th grade world history for two years and 5th grade reading and mathematics for the past eight years at Banana Elementary School in a rural community in northeast Georgia. Banana is about 89% African-American and 100% free and reduced lunch. The third through fifth grade school has made AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) for six consecutive years. The faculty of Banana Elementary has participated in the E-math grant program for the past three years. This program along with other innovative technologies has helped Banana to become extremely "high tech". All students are provided access to systems such as mobile computer labs, laptops, and smart boards.

Nevertheless, a typical day in the classroom is challenging due to Anthony having to maintain discipline and resolve conflicts in addition to teaching the class. Consequently, he stated that he "might teach maybe 20%" of a typical day. Many of the students "have a lot of baggage" and have "experiences" that he cannot fathom. For

instance, he assumed that because many of the male students come from a single-parent home and had been the men of the house for so long, they came to school with the attitude that says “look, my momma don’t tell me what to do, so why should I listen to you.” Anthony, raised by his grandmother with no male figure around, feels compelled to “cut through” this type of attitude.

Anthony believes that increasing diversity is needed to expose students to different cultures and backgrounds.

All students need to be exposed to different types of teachers ... to bring different aspects into the classroom... and expose our kids to other cultures. Until then, it’s going to be one sided... then all they’re going to get is probably BET or what they see on TV or in the neighborhood.

Anthony’s K-12 educational experience was much different from the environment in which he teaches. His experience was characterized more as being coerced to learn instead of being enticed. “You better do it, forget about trying to entice you to be educated.” However, during this experience, Anthony realized that he had to obtain an education in order to distinguish himself from the typical African-American male that surrounded him, as well as to prove that he possessed the mental capacity to achieve and be productive. “Being an African-American male made me want to become educated because I saw so many others around me who were not, and I saw so many people who had potential... who just basically threw it away.” Therefore, Anthony was always considered “one of the smart kids” in the predominately white schools that he attended. Being the only African-American in the classroom tended to be tiresome and draining to him. He felt that he did not totally go through the “black experience” and was not able to answer questions about experiences of African-Americans posed by many of his white friends. When Anthony went off to Apple State, he believed he “fit right in” because the

dynamics of the college was similar to the predominately white schools he attended throughout twelfth grade. He proclaimed his academic life was “relatively uneventful.”

Brandon

A physical education teacher in a small rural community in the Central Savannah River Area near the South Carolina border, Brandon has taught ten years in a Kindergarten through fifth grade classroom. Currently, about 70% of the students at Strawberry Elementary School are African-Americans. Of the 371 students attending the school, 85% are eligible for free/reduced meals. However, test scores ranked among the best in the district. “I think that we can hold our own as far as test scores. I think we have one of the best programs.” Discipline and structure are the keys to student success in his classroom. Many of the students, like Brandon, came from single-parent homes, “and a lot of them have a lot of hostility built up in them from those things (single-parenting) because they really don’t understand.” However, children can come from a two-parent background and have everything they need and “they end up doing some of the same things those other kids do.” Therefore; discipline and structure is needed for “all children” to ensure and maintain effective classroom management. Brandon credits the school’s success to the principal who is very supportive and encouraging. He is “a darn good principal. He will go the extra mile for you regardless if you are right or wrong.” He resolves all situations in a “professional manner.” The principal’s leadership style and the small school setting give Brandon a sense of being among family.

Brandon believes teachers provide the necessary tools for students to be successful. They are the communicators of society. “Communication between all stakeholders is very important.” He also believes “teaching is an evolution process,” and

must be diversified in its methods. Providing diversity in the teaching workforce will be beneficial for administrators, teachers, parents, and students. The educational system needs to be diverse and representative of all nationalities because “we have a culture of diversity.” Although there is a majority of females at the elementary level, there is a need to “recruit more male teachers”, black or white. “Children going to go and talk to people they feel comfortable talking to... Color didn’t have nothing to do with it. It’s the person, the heart of the individual.”

At the age of 54, Brandon’s educational experience is described as quite different from children’s experiences today. “We didn’t have those things when I was in school.” When he was in first grade, Brandon had a “unique experience.” His teacher retained everyone in the classroom because she felt no one made the grades and she was not going to pass anyone. Nevertheless, beyond that experience, education became more and more important. Brandon became a star athlete and received a football scholarship to one of South Carolina’s historically black colleges. During his college career, Brandon was selected as the school’s 100 best athletes. The dream of playing football and eventually becoming a coach was in motion. He continued his education and received a specialist degree in Leadership and Supervision.

Typically, Brandon gets to work early in order to meet and greet his co-workers, as well as parents bringing students to school while he is responsible for monitoring car-riders. After car-rider duty, Brandon immediately starts setting up for the day. “I have my essential question posted... I place the equipment out.” If the principal needs him to do something else, he does that as well. Some mornings he walks the hallways to check on particular students to “find out what kind of night” they had. In the mornings he teaches

5th, 4th, and 3rd grades. Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd graders are physically trained in the afternoons. “I’ve watched them grow from the time they could barely do these things (calisthenics), now a lot of them can do it with ease.” The afternoon is similar to his morning; Brandon goes back outside to monitor car-riders during dismissal. Regardless, Brandon has contemplated transferring to the alternative school because of the travel situation and coaching obligations.

Forrest

After attending Boston’s public schools during his kindergarten through twelfth grade years, Forrest attended college and took “classes that were more focused on what” he wanted to do. His grades soared and were more favorable in college, unlike the B’s and C’s he obtained throughout his elementary and secondary experience where he felt he “was just never really into it.” Forrest had traveled across the United States to Los Angeles, California to pursue a career in the film industry. During a down period, he took a job substituting to make ends meet while still pursuing a dream in the entertainment business. He was also in charge of an after-school program and was a teaching assistant for “six or seven months.” When his career did not prosper, Forrest became a teacher for one year. Following his migration to Georgia, he became a 5th grade language arts teacher where he has currently worked for five years at Grape Elementary School in a rural eastern community that has a 36% African-American student population. While teaching, the currently 35 year old pursued a master’s degree in reading and literacy.

Grape Elementary School has made AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) and is currently getting ready for the CRCT (Criterion Referenced Competency Test). There is also a huge endorsement for the use of technology at this school. “We’ve got the smart

boards, laptops, and there's just a big push to do more to really engage the students." Due to the increased use of video games and "so much time watching TV," many tactics are being used to reach and teach our youth today. In Forrest's classroom, he starts his classes off by playing games to get them prepared for the rest of the day. Forrest believes he usually got the "trouble" students. He contended that he is a role model for the students he teaches and the students who observe his presence. Other teachers has told him that "their kids said they want to be like" Forrest. Again, reaching the kids by any means necessary was understood.

The last thing Forrest ever thought he would become is a teacher. Although he grew up in an "educational environment," he still faced "a lot of racism and a lot of questionable stuff." He believes his teachers directed him towards the more stereotypical ideas such as asking him as a black male to "try out for the basketball team." He recalls a point in high school when he wanted to do an essay on Vietnam, the teacher told him to do something different because "that may be a little out of our scope." He said he also felt negativity from black kids as well. "Going to private school and then being around black kids who were like oh you talk like a white boy." He received opposition from both sides: black and white.

Horace

Horace, currently 35 years old, attended small neighborhood schools up through junior high school. After schools were consolidated, Horace's high school years became a time where he met and became friends with diverse people. He "began to have more interactions" with others regardless their color whether they were "black, brown, purple, and blue." Even though Horace embraced diversity, his small rural town sometimes

experienced “racial tensions.” “Unfortunately, even in this day and age, we are dealing in a society where being a black male can sometimes be frowned upon, even before people actually get to know you.” It was so important for Horace to receive an education, “especially being a black man.” However, he did not “recall a situation where there were any per se tensions there as far as the school was concerned.” Horace stated that he had numerous teachers that encouraged him to further his education. He graduated with honors and was accepted into one of Georgia’s premier universities as a Pre-Med major in biology.

Determined to become an anesthesiologist, Horace’s unexpected illness altered his career plans in the direction of education.

I realized and I know that although we may have certain plans and ideas about where we want to head and go in life, sometimes God has to direct us to where he needs us to be and where he knows we will be most effective.

Horace began substituting at the elementary school that he attended as a child. He was then encouraged by friends and his former principal to seek a career in education. First he started as a P.E teacher, but the following year he became a 5th grade teacher. “I have a tremendous task and a tremendous responsibility in helping to shape the lives of our next generation of young men and young women.” He noticed that kids needed positive African-American male role models. It is very important for African-American children to “see African-American males positively because there is so much negativity going on in our schools and communities that have to deal with race and color.” Horace proclaimed that we had come far, but not far enough to recognizing Dr. King’s dream. “Now that I’m in education that I try to get my African-American students, both male and female, to understand and realize that unfortunately this is sometimes the world we still

live in. To prove that education was important, Horace sacrificed and obtained a master's degree in Educational Administration.

Presently, Horace teaches 5th grade at Kiwi County Elementary, located in the western borders of the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA), where he has taught for eight years. The kindergarten through fifth grade school is comprised of 81% African-Americans. The majority of the African-American students live at or below the poverty level. Due to *No Child Left Behind* and other accountability mandates, "we are looking at a totally new era of teaching." Schools are trying to meet AYP goals and ensure that all mandates are met. Students are preparing to take standardized tests such as the CRCT. Teachers are working to ensure that the students' tests "don't make a poor reflection not only of themselves, but then a poor reflection of their school and their teachers." Everyone wants to make sure they are not placed on the needs improvement list.

Sheldon

At the age of 38, Sheldon, the County Teacher of the Year, has taught 4th, 5th, and 6th grade math and science for a total of sixteen years. As of now, he is teaching 5th grade at Lemon Academy. Of the 680 Pre-K through fifth grades students at this Title I Distinguished School, 78% are African-American and 89% qualify for free and reduced lunch. The school has made AYP for eight consecutive years. Lately, the school has been focusing on technology. Teachers are incorporating it into their daily plans. The E-Math program is integrated in all areas: math, science, social studies, and language arts.

Sheldon emphasized that teachers must incorporate as much technology into their lessons because "in today's society pretty much everything is like 3-D to them, everything is video, MP3s" and teachers have to compete to gain and maintain their attention. Sheldon

has to constantly push himself to be creative to make sure his students are not bored from traditional textbook teaching.

Prior to this school term, Sheldon has taught “math and science to them and then ... switch with another teacher and get the second period in the afternoon.” This year, they are replicating the middle school model by providing “four teachers and each individual teacher teach their own subject.” For the first time, Sheldon teaches only science to all students on his team. The five classes rotate every hour.

Growing up and attending “predominately white schools” in South Carolina, Sheldon feels his kindergarten through twelfth grade school experiences were “fantastic,” yet different from today’s technological savvy society. There were many things that he did not understand as a child. He was not familiar with special education or any “significant” events that would normally have gained someone’s attention. “I just didn’t notice anything.” His mother had set a specific routine for her household. “You come home, you do your homework, and then you go outside.” He participated in various sporting activities including football.

Sheldon completed school and attended college in his home state. He majored in math and was persuaded by a black male professor to add education. The same night he graduated from college, Sheldon received a call from the county he currently works in and they asked him to come in for an interview. Working as one of two African-American male elementary teachers at his school, Sheldon is impressed with his female principal’s desire to place an African-American male teacher at the elementary level because she thought “he would be a positive influence on the African-American children, especially the males in schools.” The principal:

...specifically wanted me to teach those children (African-American), and not wanting to level or anything, but they were at the bottom level, the children, and so that's how I ended up with the bottom level because they wanted me to be a positive role model for them.

Appealing to many of his former students, particularly African-American males, this "quiet" teacher has attempted to "encourage" them to achieve. Sheldon has received a Masters of Arts degree, a specialist in Educational Administration, and is currently in a doctoral program. During his undergraduate years, Sheldon pledged in a fraternity and was involved in ROTC. He found a love for spinning records as a disc jockey (DJ) and uses his hobby to assist both teachers and students in various activities and lessons. Many male students return and tell him that they were involved in many activities because they saw him involved in them.

Williams

Lime Elementary School's Teacher of the Year, William, has only taught 1st grade for five years and at the age of 26 already feels he has accomplished a milestone. Although he has gained personal satisfaction, Lime Elementary School may be closing due to attendance problems.

Our population, the kids that we serve, there's a big drop in numbers... I don't know if we are going to be open long... because right now we have 250 kids, so it's a big drop in our numbers from 400... because they closed GM (a housing project).

Lime Elementary has an enrollment of 315 Pre-K to fifth grade students. Ninety-one percent of that student population is African-American, while 96% of the entire population is eligible for free/reduced meals. A typical day at Lime Elementary is "crazy." William does not have a teaching assistant because they could not get along, so he decided he would rather work alone than have any more conflicts. Mondays are his

hardest days because he tries to organize for the week. He does this because he is unable to get certain things accomplished with only him in the classroom. William's class has "little to no discipline problems" because he provides a lot of structure, however, "wild structure." He describes this wild structure as the need to be crazy, "but then at the same time you want to have fun, and you want to learn." He is not big on the paper-pencil routine. William describes himself as "hands-on" and emphasizes that students come to school to learn, but at the same time have an opportunity to play. When William closes the door to his classroom, he is in "heaven" because he does not have anyone coming in to "bother" him.

Last year when he received the Teacher of the Year honor, William's students obtained 100% on the CRCT and he had the number one 1st grade class in the county. The spotlight on his students allowed them to see their accomplishments. He challenged his students who were above level by sending "them to second grade for half of the day, and they thought they was in college." He contends that kids want to learn. He did things out of the ordinary to reach his students.

...any way you can reach a child, reach them. If yours is sitting there, whatever, mine is getting dirty. Kids like to get dirty and I'm going to get dirty with them. I guess I take a lot of things above and beyond other teachers. I guess it's good to know the county recognizes me more so than my school.

William's educational experience was varied depending on several life-changing events. He describes elementary as being "okay" and himself as being "pretty much an A student." His middle school years were "rough," particularly after his sister's car accident. High school was defined as his "best years." William, enrolled in "college prep" subjects, was allowed to make more decisions, he was able to choose electives that were of interest to him, and he was excited about the yearbook, class pictures, and the senior

trip. However, William was seen as a “trouble-maker” throughout school. In high school he had a coach who influenced him and taught him “a lot of stuff, and what to look for, and how to act.” William felt the teachers were against him. “The teachers, they didn’t give me a hand...I always had somebody always watching me; somebody always waiting on me to mess up.”

William graduated from high school, a “big challenge,” and attended a private, majority black college on a basketball scholarship. For the most part, college life was good, but there were also times that were rough. He “had a couple of professors who didn’t like basketball players.” He got into more trouble while in college, which was a “humbling experience.” William had his first son while in college and met his wife on this very campus. He credits his wife for the dramatic change in his life, and he emphasizes that he does not want his son to make the same mistakes that he made. William asserted that, “having a kid during my junior year, it made me realize I’m not a kid anymore. I got to grow up. I got to do what I have to do for my son.” He “had to do a lot of praying” to get to the point where he is today.

William began teaching at an inner-city school, which he categorized as encompassing a population of majority African-Americans, after he left his lead supervisor position at a local supermarket. He turned down a position as an assistant manager to continue teaching. He figured teaching is “God’s calling” and he must “stay put, and be there for what you love.” In addition to teaching, William has a local yard service on the side to help him meet day-to-day needs. William observes the happenings around the community and gets to know his neighbors and people throughout community while providing this service.

Findings

The purpose of this research was to explore the attractors and barriers for selected African-American males to teach at the elementary level as well as their perceived contributions as an African-American male elementary teacher. The participants described their experiences based on the overarching question: What are the lived experiences of Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers?

Attractors

The researcher sought to identify features that attracted African-American males to become teachers at the elementary level. The respondents presented several, yet similar attractors to education, particularly elementary education, including: (1) service as role models, (2) opportunity to change careers, (3) the influence of family/friends/programs, and (4) the ability to make an early impact in students' lives.

Role model. During the interview, all of the respondents felt they were attracted to elementary education because students needed more role models. Anthony believed he was needed due to the absent father and the lack of positive male figures in African-American males' lives.

As a black male, I feel valuable or needed 'cause' most of my boys don't have a father... All they know is mama's boyfriend... I feel these kids need to see a black male figure, a positive one, standing up everyday doing the right thing... 'cause you're not going to find that many guys to begin with and you're definitely not going to find that many black guys.

Brandon highlighted the use of mentors for young black males whose fathers were not interacting much with them. "I'm like a mentor... I don't think his father spends much time with him... I want to give them that little glimmer of hope." Forrest acknowledged

that his presence as a black male in an elementary school would be beneficial to all students.

And then just being a black male... it just seemed like a good move... just to be like a positive role model, so you can give back... I think black women do pretty good with 'em because obviously the whole mother situation, but obviously everyone sees the need of them (black male child) having more positive black male influences, besides athletes and rappers, and the local drug dealers.

Due to the small percentage of positive African-American males in the community, Horace commended positive black male figures for returning to their communities to make an impact in the lives of African-American male children.

I think that so oftentimes kids get caught up in their heroes being the star football players, star basketball players... Sometimes they need to see their teachers and other individuals there in their community ... quality role model type individuals...to have another black professional that's in the community that the kids can look up to, that the kids can want to emulate.

Sheldon thought that male role models were needed prior to students' reaching the middle school level because females dominated the elementary schools.

They (African-American students) don't have a male role model at that younger age... where you still can change them before they hit middle school... I'm not saying the women are not doing a good job, but it's kind of late to have that role model once they reach that middle school... hopefully, I'm a role model.

William emphasized that he needed to be in a place where he would be most valued.

I want to do something where I figure I can be the most positive... It's like society got it where the African-American male is going two places: jail or in the dirt. They don't see enough of us period.

Role models are persons individuals admire and aspire to emulate. The participants in this study possess values, attitudes, and behaviors that students need to encounter and grasp to ensure they become better people. Imitating and developing their own identity through varied role models, especially African-American male role models, will strengthen the students' social and emotional engagement in as well as out of school.

Career Change. Most of the respondents, five of six, decided to teach at the elementary level after other job opportunities did not work out or they were needed to move from secondary or middle school to elementary. Anthony thought his relocation and the transition from middle school to elementary could not have been any better.

I feel that I've found my niche here. When I taught my two years at the middle school, I hated it... They got me down here... I came down here and Mr. S put me in the fifth grade class... I just loved it. I love the kids. I just love the people that I work with and I haven't had any regrets at all.

Brandon's move to elementary education from a more militant career was quickly challenged causing him to make adjustments that were suitable and age appropriate for the students with whom he came into contact. "I've learned that I had to make adjustments from coming off of a SWAT team for 13 years; you know you have to tone it down." Forrest decided to become a substitute teacher after he had left one filming company in order to continue working in the film industry. However, he realized that all the time and efforts needed to become a substitute; he may as well have taken classes to become a teacher.

Well, initially I'd planned to work in the film industry. I'd left working for this one company and I was like maybe I'll just work as a sub. That way, I can still work in this industry. I knew with the classes I needed to take, just with the effort for me to become a sub, I was just like, won't I become a full time teacher.

A sudden illness forced Horace from his aspirations to become an anesthesiologist. During his time of recuperation, he began to substitute at his former elementary school where he eventually decided to start his new career as a teacher.

Once I became ill and had to sit out of school for a while, I ended up subbing at the elementary school that I went to... through the urging of a couple of friends... I began to look at what avenues I would need to take to get into education...

Sheldon wanted to teach at the high school level, but he was assigned at the elementary level instead to alleviate any unwanted actions between the new young male teacher and the older female students.

I was pretty much put there because like I said I was secondary math and I always wanted to do math...because I was so young when I first moved down there and they had 18 and 19 year old girls, they saw issues. Well, they didn't see any issues, but they just didn't want any...once I got into the elementary school, I fell in love with it.

Instead of the expected, life is always filled with the unexpected. Sometimes people believe they are predestined to work in a particular field, but something happens to change that belief. Several of these participants knew in their hearts what and where they wanted to teach or work, however, due to illnesses, job availability, or job precautions, a change was inevitable. Career changers have to continue to work hard, remain engaged, keep abreast of current events, and make the best out of every situation.

Influential family members/friends/programs. The majority of the respondents, 83% or five of six, attributed their decision to become a teacher, particularly an elementary teacher, to the urging or influence of family members, friends, or programs. It seemed almost inevitable that Anthony would become an educator because of his grandmother who "knew that education was the way out," and because all of his siblings were in the field of education.

The reason why I became a teacher is all because of my grandmother...She had a 3rd grade education...She had to drop out of school so she could take care of the family...She goes, 'I think you should be or think about being a teacher.' ...And that kind of meant the world to me when she said that. I just took the first thing that came along...My wife, she's a teacher... my sister, she was a teacher...she now works for RESA...my brother, he's a science teacher... basically I come from a family of teachers. All my siblings are teachers...nothing but support.

Forrest's father was a teacher and his desire to continue his education affected his son's life at an early age.

My father was a teacher... he was probably the main person. I saw him get it, going in school, getting his masters, so at an early age I just had that thought in my mind, like it's okay for men.

Several friends and a former elementary principal encouraged Horace to consider becoming an elementary teacher. "Through the urging of a couple of friends... as well as the principal, they encouraged me as far as this being a particular career choice."

Sheldon's mother, who was a reading teacher for the Department of Juvenile Justice, gained great respect from many children, which motivated Sheldon to want to achieve the same respect. "Pertaining to education, definitely my mom...she would take me to school with her and I would see different things as a child."

William contributed his desire to teach to his disabled sister. He recalled creating, teaching and playing games with his sister to have fun. His mother had also supported his endeavors.

My sister, she was most influential. She was handicapped and I remember growing up and she couldn't walk or talk so that's what got me into teaching. We used to play a lot and had little different signs for different things. My mom of course always stood by me.

Influential black male figures have also impacted respondents' decisions to become elementary teachers. Two of the six participants or 33% recognized other African-American males as being their mentors and directing them towards the field of education. Brandon's former high school coach, now on the state senate in South Carolina, had been like a father figure to him in which they had developed a life-long relationship. His college coach was also instrumental because he was there when Brandon needed to talk.

I always wanted to be a coach...my coach in high school...he's been like a mentor for me...the other one was JC...he was like a father to me...a father I never had. I could talk to him about anything...some children that I have coached; I feel that we have that same type of relationship.

After an elaborate presentation, Sheldon's college professor asked him if he ever considered becoming a teacher, and told him that he seriously needed to think about that option.

...he (college professor) said I was so elaborate and I engrossed everybody in the way I did it (presentation) and he asked me if I ever wanted to become a teacher... why don't you just add the education and then that way you would have something to fall back on. And that's how I became a math education major.

Recruiting programs have been recognized as influencing many people to become teachers. The selected African-American male elementary teachers have provided relevant information about reasons they were attracted to education, specifically elementary education. In addition to their intrinsic motivations, the selected African-American males were hired immediately. However, there were several recruiting initiatives such as The Call Me Mister and The Men Equipped to Nurture programs that agencies utilized to assist in the recruitment of African-American male teachers and other minorities into teaching. However, the selected African-American male elementary teachers from Georgia were not aware of recruiting programs.

Anthony stressed:

I'm not familiar with any...I don't know of any recruiting services or programs...after we did our student teaching, we went to a meeting where all of the different personnel directors from surrounding counties would sit in a room and, this is what we want, and this is what we looking for...

Brandon asserted:

I don't know what type of recruiting programs we have here...but I guess I am very familiar with the one that I've seen around Ripe County...they had career development day, where they would bring different vendors in and they would

present their programs.

Horace emphasized:

As far as recruitment is concerned, I know that there are some recruitment efforts that are made, but the extent of those recruitment efforts I do not know on a full scale...there are significant strides that potentially need to be made as far as getting teachers recruited to a rural area such as (here) and these types of places, but exactly what's being done I would be amidst in saying specifics.

Sheldon highlighted:

I was registered in Columbia, SC...They actually called and asked if any African-American males have applied to their county and that's how they got my number. They actually called different counties asking for African-American males to come...there is also a program that for any African-American male can go to school for free and as long as they go into teaching.

Relatives are one of the main influences in a person's decision to teach. Many people trust their family members to guide them toward the right path. Others place a lot of emphasis on and respect in the guidance of clergymen, former teachers/administrators, and friends. These people have shown the participants a characteristic that they can identify and emulate. Although the selected African-American male elementary teachers did not identify recruiting programs such as Call Me Mister as reasons for influencing their decisions to select education as a career, the programs have set precedence and their recruiting tactics are noted by the researcher.

Making an early impact. Making an early impact in students' lives was another reason why half the respondents chose elementary teaching as an area of interest.

Brandon contended that the earlier an African-American male teacher comes into contact with students, the more significant the change. Elementary is where the foundation is built to succeed in life. "I think that's the early years of their lives, and if you catch them at that point in their lives, you can make a dramatic change in their lives because this is

the learning years.” Sheldon felt men should be encouraged to teach at the elementary level because of the 78% African-Americans at his school, “I would say 60% are single-housed, single-female, so the male is absent.” He believed a black male role model was needed sooner in African-American students’ lives.

The male is absent...so they don’t have a male role model at that younger age...I’m not saying the women are not doing a good job, but it’s kind of late to have that role model once they reach that middle school. They need them at an early age.

African-American males’ presence had to start in the elementary years because a black male needs to be seen to help keep young black males on track, according to William.

We loose a lot of guys and women, black women and black guys because they don’t see enough of our color and they definitely don’t see enough of black males at the elementary...I wanted to give something back, more...young kids growing up need to see a black male’s face because most of them are going astray...you got to teach them how to read in elementary, so I figure if I start there, it’s a possibility you can change. You can change the whole structure of how the system is going.

The availability of African-American male teachers early in a student’s educational experience is beneficial. The students will encounter a diverse teaching staff, teaching method, and discipline. Making an early impact in students’ lives by providing a diverse teaching staff such as being a male, being a teacher, and being at the elementary level allows students to acknowledge diversity and aspire to become anything they would like, including a teacher, a male teacher, an African-American male teacher.

Barriers

The researcher explored Georgia’s African-American male elementary teachers’ perceived barriers for becoming and remaining elementary teachers. Seeking to find barriers to why teachers, particularly African-American male teachers, leave or never enter elementary education was on the agenda of the researcher. Respondents provided

barriers that included: 1) salary, 2) standardized testing, 3) students (academics/behavior), 4) acceptance/expectations, and 5) travel time/distance.

Salary. Approximately half of the respondents agreed that salary was a major barrier to becoming a teacher, specifically at the elementary level. Forrest asserted that the elementary teaching salary was not enough to support a family. He also joked that after taxes and other deductions, the male breadwinner could probably make more money at a fast food restaurant.

...maybe a barrier is the pay. For males, you're kind of the breadwinner, you're the provider. I have a son, so when they deduct child support and taxes, I could be working at Pizza Hut or something... The pay is so... I mean it's not horrible, but for males, you're not really like the provider... But as a teacher, the pay is like, it's just not that strong where I think a lot of times people might be a little less likely to do it.

If you are looking to get rich, teaching at elementary schools was not considered the right profession, claims Horace.

Probably the greatest barrier unfortunately is money. Education and especially elementary school is not something you are getting into for the money... education is probably not for you if you're looking to get rich quick.

William believed that for all the hard work a person had to put into becoming a teacher the salary was not worth it. "The salary makes you not want to become a teacher for what you have to go through."

During times when the cost of food and gas are expensive, salary is considered a major consideration when searching for a job. Many people agree that education is not the career to pursue if money is an issue. However, salaries improve through steps, degrees, and additional certification. Therefore, to receive an adequate salary, one must constantly strive to attain higher degrees and receive additional educational endorsements, which may be too costly and time consuming.

Standardized testing. Standardized testing was a barrier for three of the six respondents. Anthony contended that standardized testing, which was unfair to those who were uncertified, yet capable of functioning well on the job, did not have anything to do with what was going on in the classroom.

I would probably say the testing. Yeah, and that really aggravates me because it really has nothing to do with the job. It's not a theoretical job. You can't do this job in theory. You got to close that door and come in here and get your feet wet and actually do the job with the children, just you and those kids. The test has nothing to do with how well you can become a teacher... So, if I can mention a barrier, even though it hasn't been one for me, I would say testing.

Doing well on standardized tests had been a barrier for Sheldon every time he had to take them. As a child and even an adult, he had difficulty passing tests on his first attempt.

If you put me in a classroom and then give me a test on what you taught me, I can pass it. But, you give me a standardized test that I have no clue, that's my weak spot and that's a barrier for me, those standardized tests. Even as an adult, I've never been good with standardized testing... the SAT, the PRAXIS, and all. The GACE... I had to take the Triple E... three times before I passed it. I had to take the PRAXIS II two times here before... It's those standardized tests.

In contrast, William did not have difficulty passing tests, but has noticed that it is a "big barrier" for many. However, he often second guessed himself after testing and was not always confident that he had passed after completion.

PRAXIS was ok. I passed both on the first try... It was a lot of writing, unnecessary writing I think... The PRAXIS, I guess I can say that was a big barrier because I didn't think I was going to pass. You know how you second guess yourself...

Standardized tests are necessary for accountability measures; however, they have become burdensome when some of the most qualified personnel are not considered certified due to low test scores. Teachers that have been teaching for years have to take and retake standardized tests to prove they are highly qualified. Many teachers,

particularly minorities, have difficulty passing standardized tests because they are either ill-prepared or do not possess the study and test-taking skills needed to be successful.

Students (academics and behavior). Teaching students is the major duty and responsibility of the teacher, but in recent years, students, particularly their desire to achieve and their behavior, had many teachers contemplating leaving the profession, while others were reluctant to enter the teaching field. Five of the six respondents thought students' behavior was a barrier to becoming or remaining in education. Instead of teaching, Anthony and Forrest felt that because they were black and because they were males, all of the "hard heads" or "trouble makers" were placed in their classrooms.

Anthony claimed:

Sometimes a typical day is just managing kids, sometimes I cannot, even though I try as hard as I can, I cannot teach what I want to because this person is having it out with that person and that's one fire I got to put out...one of the down sides to that, is that if you're a black male in elementary school, chances are you're going to get the hard heads. Chances are they're going to give them to you because for some reason, I guess, they figure you can handle it. You can relate to 'em. I love the kids, even the hard head.

Forrest stated: ...they usually send me, a student that like, a trouble student.

One of the respondents, Brandon, hinted about the male's fear to touch or show affection toward students.

I'm just thinking a lot of people just don't want to teach elementary children. It could be that they might be afraid...you have to let them know that you love them and giving them pats on the backs, making sure that you are also staying within the guidelines.

Horace and Sheldon contended that it was hard reaching and was getting harder to reach the unmotivated student.

Horace proclaimed:

Sometimes when you try to reach certain kids and you've done all the things that you felt like you could do and then because of their home life and their home situation that even your greatest efforts aren't fruitful.

Sheldon insisted:

The kids are not as motivated as they were 16 years ago... It is becoming harder to teach... And with them coming on a lower level, the discipline, the behavior problem is even worse... You know, I don't know if I can continue.

African-American teachers, particular African-American males, tend to get students who have problems in both academic and behavioral areas. Encountering such problems on a daily basis begin to take its toll on a person and make them feel incompetent and inadequate. The male teacher also has to be wary of inappropriate touching and false accusations of touching. Their careers can be lost by one "bad" touch, one bad day, or one bad encounter.

Acceptance/expectations. Three respondents expressed during the interview that they had a difficult time accepting other's perceptions of teaching, and accepting that they possessed the ability to be competent teachers, that they were just as capable as their co-workers. Anthony does not feel he is an adequate teacher. He often compares himself to other teachers.

I have an inferiority complex to begin with... I always feel that I'm not a good teacher... I always feel that the person next door or down the hall is much better than I am... I still feel that I'm not that good a teacher.

Horace contended that there is a lack of respect for the teaching profession.

Another barrier that I would say is the fact that for me there is a lot of a lack of respect for teachers today for whatever reason...some of the people are caught up in what we would call the more upscale jobs: doctors, lawyers, engineers, and all these type things...The status of being a teacher sometimes lack luster of being a teacher can be a potential barrier... Individuals looked at my job as to say yall got the summers off and ...sometimes dismiss the job that has been done and to think that it is something that's gravy due to the fact of having two weeks off at Christmas...They don't realize what's going on everyday within those classrooms

and then the struggles that you are going through as a teacher and dealing with so many different dynamics because you are dealing with different kids.

William insisted that a major barrier was acceptance by his peers.

...being a male, you are surrounded by a lot of women... you always have to know the intentions of the person you are dealing with. Some of the female teachers are very supportive. Some of them, they are wondering why you are in the classroom and not in the gym. Then they wonder if you can do what people say you can do... How would the staff accept me? Would I be good?

Distance/travel. Two of the six respondents discussed distance and travel time as barriers to teaching, especially in a rural area in which they were working. Anthony and Brandon both had to travel long distances to reach their destination. Anthony stated that he did not “want to go too far. The area in which he teaches is far. “I drive 30 miles to get here, 30 miles to go back home everyday.” Brandon’s ride is much longer. “The ride takes a toll on you. I drive 126 miles a day to work, 63 miles one way.”

Traveling to work for long distances has its advantages and disadvantages. Although traveling and distance was not described as a major barrier in the literature, it was mentioned by two of the selected participants as a hindrance. As a barrier, the commuting can place a strain on the budget. The cost effectiveness of traveling back and forth is not always worth the commute. The drive can also physically drain a person’s body causing them to feel more tired. Sometimes tiredness leads to an inability to function properly on the job.

Perceived Contributions

During the interview sessions, the researcher sought to find African-American males’ perceived contributions to elementary students, teachers, schools, communities, and other African-American males. Respondents provided several contributions that encompassed: 1) role modeling/mentoring; 2) relating/male talk; and 3) supporting.

Role modeling/mentoring. Four respondents believed that role modeling could help alter students' attitudes and behaviors because they expected and wanted the best out of them. Anthony felt that he offered his students patience, "the common courtesies", and the ability to lead by example.

I think some of the things that I have to offer my kids are a lot of things...you know, patience, the common courtesies, that a lot of the kids do not have-common courtesies. We have to teach them to say, no ma'am and yes sir, or thank you or no thank you... I try to lead by example... If I get something from a child, I'll say, 'could you please do this for me?'... Hopefully, my example will be enough for them...that they can take what I give them and use it in their life.

Forrest asserted that the more African-American males seen in elementary education, the easier it would be to recruit other African-American males into the field. "I think just being a role model and ... just doing it, other people seeing what you do, it makes them say, you know, maybe education's not that bad."

Sheldon's contention that demonstrating the proper way to gain and achieve success would benefit students, while gaining and achieving respect for himself among the students.

Hopefully, I'm a role model...I try to demonstrate by showing that you can succeed if you try, but it's a lot of hard work. Respect is one of the biggest things I try to teach them. If you show respect, or give respect, then you will get respect back...I try to show them how to respect and to share and to give... I always buy...and let them know that it will all come back to me...because someone will treat me the same way. I'm trying to get them to see that if you share and show respect, then if you give respect, people will be willing to do things for you.

William thought simple motivation could help keep students, especially black male students, off the streets and out of trouble.

Motivation, I always try to tell my kids you can do anything you put your mind to. I'm always positive...I give them a chance to see black men are somewhere other than jail or on the corner selling drugs. I also instill in them that even though you work, it's still going to be some struggles. You are still going to have to overcome a lot of stuff and just the decisions you make while you are young can affect your

whole life.

Mentoring students in the schools and around the community had allowed four of the respondents the opportunity to improve academic and behavioral circumstances of the students they were assisting. Anthony mentored students by giving them an opportunity to review skills in problem areas, particularly pertaining to the CRCT (Criterion Referenced Competency Test).

...at least once a month on Saturdays, we'll take some kids from the neighborhood and we bring them into the school and... we just go over skills with 'em. A lot of those kids are really deficient...like last week, for example, we went over study skills, CRCT practice, and stuff like that. We do that for the children-elementary children.

Brandon had developed a relationship with a young male to help guide him and decrease the behavior problems that he was experiencing due to the lack of a male figure.

I'm a mentor to him. I carry him to races...His problem is, I don't think his father spends much time with him... when I first started mentoring him he had some attitude problems. He still get a little upset...but I've noticed that it has decreased because of the type of relationship we have...I constantly talk to him about life...They need mentors. They need to have somebody they can go to.

Forrest had also developed relationships with "troubled" students outside of school in order to improve their attitudes within. In addition to the mentoring, Forrest tutored at a local tutoring company to assist in the community.

I would take him home sometimes and we'd go out to Subway and talk...he'd always ask about my son...well, he got a chance to meet my son, and we all hung out. I'll kinda mentor him, go to his house, hang out, and then I work for a tutoring company...I'll go over there and tutor and talk about issues, might bring them something to read that relates to their lifestyle.

According to William, mentoring is most effective when working with a variety of groups. He proclaimed that he loved all the kids regardless if they were from the inner city or not. He just enjoyed working with children.

I got different little groups that I work with. I just don't work with inner city black kids. I got a Jewish team that I coach. I supervise those kids. I mentor to those kids. I got a Boys to Gs group that I mentor to, the G stand for gentlemen. I mentor to a lot of kids in this neighborhood. Like my neighbors, their kids are always running over Mr. William can you help me with this.

The African-American male elementary teacher perceives he is a role model/mentor. For some, the attractors to teaching included becoming role models for students; therefore, when the opportunity presented itself, the teacher was available to help mentor and guide the hearts and minds of students, particularly African-American male students. Developing meaningful relationships with students provides them with the necessary tools to learn and grow into productive citizens.

Relating/male talk. The African-American male respondents perceived they were able to relate to the African-American student, specifically the African-American male. These four participants also believed they were able to talk to them in a way that would redirect their behavior and build a relationship that other teachers may not be able to achieve.

Anthony can talk to them about their dress and how it affects their academic success as well as the perceptions of others about their outward appearance.

One thing about being a black male is I can be like pull your pants up. You need to pull your pants up, or I can take them outside and say something to him that I may not be able to say to someone else. It's really a good thing, so I have a pretty good rapport with the boys... I use to always make the boys tuck their pants in, tuck their shirt in, and tighten their belts.

Forrest attributes his experiences to being able to relate to students and his ability to provide them with a more eclectic view of the world.

Well, I just think I have a varied experience. I grew up in Boston, the New Hampshire, and I lived in California, and now I'm here. I feel like I never really liked school as a kid, so I kinda already feel where a lot 'em are coming from, you know, I feel that I can give them a certain perspective and I feel like I'm not one

of those teachers where, like, when they say stuff that I usually know. I know the songs that they listen to. When they dress a certain way, like if I know what that means...so I feel like a lot of the things that do that they feel like a teacher don't know.

Horace insists that being real and letting the student know from the onset that they must perform well in order to be heard in this society.

I always talk to them. I be real with them... I think sometimes I probably said things that in actuality probably could have gotten me in serious trouble...I don't try to sugar coat it with my kids...I think that I've done a good job of being real with them and letting them know about some of these harsh reality of life that sometimes people don't want to talk with kids about...also have given them positive information to go and to deal with, to give them needed guidance and instruction in handling things the right way and doing things the way they should be done.

William thought his harsh story of last chances and prison made an impact on one particular student.

I had one kid even tell me he was going to be a teacher and this was the BADDEST little boy I've ever seen in my life...nobody could do anything with him...And this kid now he's doing good. They gave him another chance. I told him this is your last chance. This is your chance or you are going to be at Bungalow Road and you will probably end up in prison. I guess me saying that made him open his eyes... I try to keep up with kids.

There is something about the male teacher that captures and inspires the young minds of students. Although a female teacher is just as capable as a male, all students benefit from the male's presence. Some of the male participants in this study were able to do and say things to the students that made them listen, made them aware of choices, made them rationalize. African-American male teachers are familiar with the African-American culture and know the proper protocol to communicating with and disciplining the African-American student. They have been taught in traditional, predominantly white schools and have developed a strategy for effectively communicating with white students as well as other minority students.

Supporting. Horace and Sheldon felt that their support in the school and around the community contributed to students' success and academic achievement because they were observed participating in capacities that would ensure a positive and effective school system.

Horace stated:

They realize and understand and know that I genuinely care, have a genuine passion for helping in whatever capacity that I can around the school...I'm always willing to avail myself to help out in various activities whether it's fall festival, whether it's talent shows, whether it's dances we may hold, and all these types of other activities that we may have for the students that I want to be sure that I can contribute to helping these things come to pass in whatever capacity that I'm needed in.

Sheldon asserted:

First of all, we meet constantly...we bring samples of the students' work and then...we critique the student work...We get together and help each other design curriculum activities...I try to go out and help with charitable events, you know Relay for Life, and all that...you know the recreation football, basketball. When we just had this tornado to hit, you know I volunteered...I do a lot of volunteering... You know, help cut down trees...nursing home...had a fall festival so I DJ that for free for them. I do different things...not particularly that will go to education as resonant, but up and around the community.

Some teachers feel they contribute to the success of their school and community by volunteering and providing support in any capacity. The African-American male teachers' efforts to improve test scores, supervise extracurricular activities, and support charitable events, make him visible and more valued in the system. Observing the African-American male elementary teacher around the school encourages other students to participate in school activities.

Summary

The researcher scheduled interviews with six Georgia African-American male elementary teachers after clearance was received from Georgia Southern University's

Institutional Review Board. The researcher obtained the lived experiences of the selected African-American male elementary teachers throughout the southeast portion of Georgia. According to the demographic profiles, the participants selected in this qualitative study were diverse in age, degrees held and total years of experience.

The researcher's findings in the study noted common themes and patterns within the African-American males' lived experiences. Features that attracted African-American male elementary teachers to elementary education included: (1) service as role models, (2) opportunity to change careers, (3) the influence of family/friends/programs, and (4) the ability to make an early impact in students' lives. Barriers to becoming an African-American male elementary teacher included: (1) salary; (2) standardized testing; (3) students (academics/behavior); (4) acceptance/expectations; and (5) travel time/distance. Finally, contributions that African-American male elementary teachers perceived they were providing within the schools and their communities were comprised of: (1) role modeling; (2) mentoring; (3) relating/male talk; and (4) supporting.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher reported the summary of the study, discussion of the findings, conclusions and implications according to the findings, and recommendations based on the analysis of the study's data.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify attractors and barriers to teaching at the elementary level as well as the perceived contributions to elementary education of the selected African-American male elementary teachers. The overarching research question guiding this study was: What are the lived experiences of Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers?

The sub-questions that assisted in the research were:

1. What features attract African-American males in Georgia to teach at the elementary level?
2. What do Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers perceive are barriers for their becoming or remaining elementary teachers?
3. What perceptions do African-American males have about their contributions to elementary education in Georgia?

This qualitative study was completed through the use of semi-structured interviews that were conducted with six African-American male elementary teachers who had taught at least five consecutive years at the elementary level in Georgia. The researcher scheduled the interviews with the African-American male elementary teachers

at a time and location most convenient for them. Each interview consisted of 20 questions and at times follow-up questions were used to ascertain additional information needed to gain full understanding of reported data. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher. The researcher coded the attractors, barriers, and perceived contributions, and then looked for common themes and patterns within each category. Anonymity was maintained by using pseudonyms to identify the African-American male elementary teacher and their respective elementary school.

Discussion of Research Findings

This research was designed to explore the lived experiences of selected African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia through their attractors, barriers, and perceived contributions of elementary teaching. The following major findings had implications for the conclusions of this study.

Research Question 1

What features attract African-American males in Georgia to teach at the elementary level? The respondents' answers to the qualitative, semi-structured interview questions relating to the attractors were used to answer this research question. The selected African-American male elementary teachers' reasons for being attracted to elementary education were reflected in four common themes: (1) to serve as role models, (2) to change careers, (3) the influence of family/friends/programs, and (4) to make an early impact in students' lives.

Taylor (2003) declared that black males are in need of black male role models with whom they can identify and emulate traits of intelligence, capability, and worthiness. In this study, all six African-American male elementary teachers indicated

that they were attracted to elementary education because of the need of role models at this level. The participants agreed with Corbin and Pruitt's (1999) assumption that observing successful African-American males positively impacts the African-American male students' educational experience. However, many African-American male students admire athletes and famous entertainers rather than academically successful models (Ogbu, 2003). Therefore, the six participants believed an early observance of and contact with African-American male teachers could provide students, especially the African-American male students, with a "black professional" whom they admired and emulated. Zirkle (2002) asserted that when at least one race- and gender-matched role model is encountered, students perform better academically, enjoy achievement related activities, and look up to adults rather than their peers. Based on the current findings, the respondents considered themselves as positive male figures for students, particular the African-American student, at the elementary level.

Ingersoll (2003) declared that teacher turnover occurs either by attrition (leavers) or migration (movers). This "revolving door" phenomenon of teachers entering and exiting the profession impacts students' academic performance and their educational opportunities (Patterson, Roehrig, & Luff, 2003). However, recruitment and retention initiatives such as Troops to Teachers, Teach for America, Call Me Mister, and alternative teacher certification programs are utilized to search for career changers, paraprofessionals, high school students, African-Americans, males, and candidates from other countries. Career changers in this study, whether changing from another job or another grade level, entered the elementary level and are content with their choice or their placement. According to Priadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003), career changers noted

that teaching was a stable and secure profession that allows them to serve the community. Several respondents revealed that they obtained the elementary position by happenstance. They disclosed that the reasons they were teaching at the elementary level included the need to change careers due to their other jobs not fulfilling their needs, and after relocation to another school or district, administrators assigned them to the area of need, which at times were elementary classrooms.

People's decisions to teach can be influenced by several factors. Many teachers, particularly male teachers, credit their decisions to becoming teachers to their family members, specifically their mothers, to friends, and/or to community leaders (Cooney & Bittner, 2001). Aligned with the research literature, participants in this study chose to become teachers primarily because of influential family members. The participants credited primarily their mothers, fathers, or grandparents for their decision to teach. Although not seen as a common occurrence, the constant assistance with disabled family members and the observance of the special needs students' treatment in school also impacted some decisions to become teachers. McCray, Sindelar, Neal, and Kilgore (2002) asserted that the placement of family members in special education programs due to disabilities had been found to be a reason, either positively or negatively, why some teachers decided to teach.

Some participants were attracted to elementary teaching because they believed the earlier an African-American male was involved in the education of a child, particular an African-American male child, the more profound the effect. Researchers (Canada, 2000; Johnston, Mckeown, & Mcewen, 1999; Skelton, 2003) maintained that the presence of male teachers of any race at the primary level fostered positive attitudes, enhanced

socialization skills, and increased self-esteem among boys, as well as confronted negative stereotypes of male teachers and provided the boys with the right kind of male role model at an early age. The presence of African-American male teachers earlier in the educational process enhanced the African-American male students' academic and social development (Brown & Butty, 1999). Participants in the study asserted that the sooner black males were seen in the educational setting, the easier it would be to change the system.

Research Question 2

What do Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers perceive are barriers for their becoming and remaining elementary teachers? Respondents provided the researcher with answers to the research question that related to perceived barriers of teaching at the elementary level. The major findings relating to the barriers of becoming an African-American male elementary teacher included: (1) salary, (2) standardized testing, (3) students (academics/behavior), (4) acceptance/expectations, and (5) travel time/distance.

Salary was considered a major barrier to becoming a teacher, especially an elementary teacher. In accordance with Rice and Goessling (2005), low compensation was a barrier to teaching because it was suggested that more profitable salaries could be obtained in other fields. Participants believed that the wages they received were not enough to "make ends meet" and they definitely were not in the teaching profession for the money because the career was not a "get rich quick" business. Although going back to school and obtaining higher degrees could lead to increased salaries, participants felt

they did not make enough money in regards to all the hard work and efforts needed to attain a greater salary.

Okezie (2003) asserted that a barrier to African-American males becoming educators was their inability to pass standardized examinations due to poor academic preparations. The respondents also regarded standardized testing as a barrier to becoming a teacher. Some thought the testing was irrelevant and kept a lot of the more qualified candidates out of the field. Many had to take required tests more than once in order to obtain a position as an educator. However, some African-American male teachers did not have problems with the testing, but observed the difficulties other African-American males were having pertaining to taking the test.

Respondents attributed students' academic attainment and behavior as barriers to teaching elementary students. The respondents were dealing with students who were not motivated, as well as with students who had more discipline issues within the classrooms. Taylor (2003) highlighted that African-American male teachers exercised more control over African-American male students because they were seeking attention and approval from the teacher. The African-American male teachers in the study perceived that they received all of the discipline problems, mostly African-American male students, because they were thought to be able to "handle" them. The African-American male teachers were considered the disciplinarian for the African-American child, but at times the teachers were overwhelmed and exhibited "jaded" attitudes.

A major barrier to becoming a male elementary teacher regardless of the race throughout the research literature, but rarely mentioned in this study was inappropriate touching, hitting, or relationships between male teachers and students. Noteworthy, only

two respondents mentioned inappropriate behaviors between male teachers and students as a area of precaution. One of the participants concluded that even though a teacher should show students affection, the male teacher must be careful to “follow the guidelines” and be sure to alleviate any misconceptions. The other noted that his superintendent felt his presence at the high school level would probably be problematic because the possibility of inappropriate relationships being established with older female students. Researchers have noted that, many male teachers sought employment in other fields because they felt they constantly had to negotiate their masculinity (Grant & Murray, 1999; Skelton, 2001). According to Nelson (2002), the perceptions of the public about male teachers and the supposedly inappropriate relations with students tended to frighten males away from the profession; however, this was not a factor in the current study.

The African-American male respondents in the study felt their expectations of themselves and the expectations of or acceptance by peers were barriers to teaching elementary. Even though several of the respondents were deemed good teachers, they always perceived themselves as not being good enough or not “like the teacher next door”. Respondents thought their teaching abilities were not adequate. Many have often questioned themselves and their capabilities. In addition, the female teachers at the elementary level were skeptical of males working with children. These teachers have questioned the males’ abilities and their intentions to teach at the elementary level.

A final barrier to teaching among the selected participants was traveling long distances. Many of the respondents interviewed for the study worked in small rural communities and the travel distance and time needed to get to and from work each day

was expensive, yet relaxing. Even though the drive was mentioned as a potential problem, the joy of entering the classroom and teaching the children outweighed the long drive. According to Brownell, Bishop, and Sindelar (2005), rural districts such as the areas the majority of the respondents worked in were faced with the difficulty of securing and retaining teachers due to the remote locations of the schools and the lack of social and cultural activities that larger districts experience.

Research Question 3

What perceptions do African-American males have about their contributions to elementary education in Georgia? The major findings of the last category, perceived contributions of African-American male elementary teachers, consisted of: (1) role modeling/mentoring; (2) relating/male talk; and (3) supporting.

Respondents perceived they were role models for the students in the schools in which they taught. Providing this positive African-American male role model showed that there were professional black males available for youth to emulate, as well as to dispel the notion that the majority of black males were found in jails or on the street corners selling drugs. Based on a statement by Skelton (2001), there is not a lack of male role models, but there is a large group of models that negatively impacts the male child, which may discourage their academic achievement. Holland (1996) stated that African-American male role models' presence in primary grades benefited the African-American male student by preventing the development of negative attitudes toward school and by promoting high levels of academic success among the boys.

Mentoring is a contribution that gave the respondents the opportunity to guide students in both academic and behavioral areas. Whether they mentored individual

students or groups, the respondents were seen as positive figures directing the students with whom they encountered toward a more prosperous future. These mentors described themselves as role models for the academically and behaviorally challenged. They perceived themselves as effective because they were able to relate to the students and get to the core of the matter by simply being available. Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, and Bridgest (2003) noted that all students', particularly African-American male students', achievement increases when they encounter teachers who understand their social and cultural needs.

Several of the respondents perceived they contributed an ability to relate to and have those special talks with their students. The African-American male teachers in this study were able to "talk" to them in a way that other teachers did not feel comfortable or were not able to do. This male way had been characterized as being a different teaching approach, an alternative authority figure, and a healthy role model (Milloy, 2003). Many respondents had acknowledged that they did not "sugar coat" what needed to be said to the students. They developed a good rapport with the students by being familiar with the students' wants, needs, and desires. Familiarity of feelings of not "liking" school much, music, and dances, in which they were all accustomed, benefited the respondents and allowed these relationships to grow and prosper.

Finally, respondents felt they provided support to peers and were willing to serve in whatever capacity deemed necessary at the school and/or the community level. They collaborated to develop lesson plans, align the curriculum, and assess student work to make learning fun and easier. These respondents also provided support when there were after school and Saturday activities going on in the building.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researcher found that there were three factors that distinguished African-American male elementary teachers from other teachers, which included: (1) the utilization of race and gender to develop relationships between the students and the teachers that affects students' achievement, discipline, resilience, and work ethics; (2) the school system's reliance on standardized test scores and the African-American male students' inadequate preparation throughout school has enabled them from obtaining the proper certification to become teachers; and (3) the teachers' perceived contribution to elementary education and education in general was their ability to relate to the African-American male student through their ability to "talk" to them in a way other teachers were not inclined to try, as well as to advocate for more African-American males to the profession.

The earlier an African-American male teacher is observed in the lives of students, the more significant the role model's academic and social impact. The selected African-American male elementary teachers were attracted to elementary education because they felt their presence in students' daily school experiences allowed them to promote high levels of academic achievement among African-American male students. Academic achievement was promoted by allowing the students to see black professionals from in and around their communities that demonstrated successful attributes.

Discipline issues beginning as early as the primary years led the selected African-American male elementary teachers to want to overshadow the negative influences seen in the communities, in sports, and in entertainment. The benefits of a positive role model such as an African-American male teacher, allowed the students in their schools to come

into contact with a positive figure that followed the rules and made an honest living on a daily basis.

Resiliency is an individual's ability to be flexible when faced with varied situations and experiences. Many African-American students have encountered or have felt they have encountered racism or some form of racism in schools. The participants in this study can associate themselves with the racial socialization component that some African-American students, particularly African-American male students, are familiar. At times the respondents felt they needed to "be real" and let the students know about the "harsh reality(ies) of life" in which many teachers were apprehensive to talk about. Knowing what is waiting, allowed the student to prepare themselves for whatever they were faced.

Standardized testing was a barrier that has kept many African-American males out of the education field. According to Okezie (2003), the academic preparation of the African-American male student is the key. Poor preparation throughout the learning process negatively affects the African-American male students' educational attainment, which has led to the failure to pass standardized tests and the failure to receive a teacher certification to become teachers. In contrast, adequate preparation has led to greater academic success, which has led to passing test scores and the ability to earn a teacher certification. African-American male teachers are needed throughout the educational system to serve as models of success and firm disciplinarians to help improve African-American male students' test scores and provide an illustration of a "real" role model.

The manner in which the selected African-American male elementary teachers talk to the students can be characterized as male talk. This firm type of discipline or

“talk” is used to redirect students’ behavior and build a trusting relationship between the student and the teacher. The participants asserted that students observed similarities between themselves and the African-American male elementary teachers, which further enhanced the development of a trusting relationship.

The fear of being accused of inappropriate behaviors (i.e. touching and/or hitting) with students was not a major barrier among the selected African-American male elementary teachers as it was with male elementary teachers in the literature reviewed. However, the superintendent and principal of one participant had an issue with this young African-American male teaching secondary students because the students were much older and they thought it would be best this young male taught elementary students. Another participant pointed out the need to be careful with the way you touch young children even though educators must be able to show the children that they care for and love them.

In conclusion, there is a need to increase the African-American male teacher supply at the elementary level to assist in diversifying the teacher workforce. The African-American male teacher is also desired to provide boys, particularly African-American boys, with needed guidance and support earlier in the educational process. African-American male teachers must continue to advocate the need for more African-American male teachers, work hard to prepare African-American students to be successful in order for them to pass standardized tests to be considered for job opportunities in teaching, and be that nurturer for all students without fearing the stereotypical assumptions that a male teacher is not caring or is prone to having inappropriate behaviors with the students.

Implications

There is a great demand on state, district, and local administrators as well as college and university systems to collaborate with one another to find effective ways to resolve the teacher shortage issue. The demands of *No Child Left Behind* have further impacted the teacher recruiting process and have widened the teacher quality gap. However, attracting minority teachers such as African-American males provide all students, particularly African-American male students, with quality role models. A more representative cohort of teachers could also serve as advocates to capture the attention of and direct more minorities to the profession. Aggressive and intentional recruiting and retention tactics are needed to obtain quality teachers and to reduce teacher attrition and migration rates.

Several implications were determined from the data found. Based on the findings of the study, the following implications related to school administrators from the building level to district and state levels, and finally the postsecondary level.

According to the information found in this study, superintendents and school principals should develop a strategic plan to recruit and retain minority teachers, particularly African-American males. Teachers, also involved in the planning process, should identify and nurture interested students toward becoming teachers, especially at the elementary level.

The building level administrator along with the teaching staff must become more aware of diversity issues and the effects on student learning outcomes. All teachers, regardless of race and gender, have the gift of reaching and teaching individual students; however, in order to completely meet the needs of the African-American male students,

the teacher must acknowledge and express their concern with and for racial components of the students' lives.

African-American males should want to be role models for all students. However, the African-American male students, many of whom do not have a positive male figure in their lives, are in need of positive male influences. When the African-American male student observes African-American male teachers earlier in the educational process they may consider teaching as a career choice, further diversifying the teaching population.

In congruence with efforts in South Carolina, Georgia's colleges, universities and high schools should incorporate on a large scale teacher recruiting and preparation programs that specifically target and recruit African-American male elementary teachers.

In order to attract more minority teachers, particularly African-American male teachers, the findings suggested that there was a need to make prospective education students and teachers aware of programs designed to specifically recruit them into education. If such programs are to exist in Georgia, there should be a collaborative process between programs, colleges and universities, and districts to ensure the ability to diversify the teacher workforce. African-American males should want to teach at the elementary level because they will provide diversity among the staff. The researcher recommends African-American males should be targeted in middle and high schools and encouraged to become teachers, specifically elementary teachers.

The African-American male teachers possessed a "way" to talk to black students, in particular the black male students. These teachers found that developing a good rapport with the students would assist in developing a healthy relationship between the students and the teacher. This established bond has allowed for differences in the African-

American males' teaching styles and discipline. All teachers must find that niche that will allow them to enter the hearts and minds of struggling students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher suggests the following recommendations for potential African-American male elementary teachers and relevant district and state level administrators in K-12 and postsecondary education.

The researcher recommends additional research on the attractor, barriers, and perceived contributions of African-American male teachers. A larger sample size should also be considered when replicating this study. Additional research will validate the findings of this study regarding reasons why African-American choose to teach elementary education, why they leave or never enter the profession, and what they have to contribute to the students, the school, and the community as a whole.

Another recommendation for future researchers includes expanding the area of study. Broadening the research throughout the entire state of Georgia, the southeast region, and/or the entire United States will allow future researchers to generalize data found to more African-American male elementary teachers.

The researcher recommends that a research study of elementary school administrators and their perceptions of African-American males teaching at the elementary level. Accessing this information can lead to the analysis of elementary school administrators hiring practices.

To determine if there is a difference between African-American male elementary teachers and other minority male elementary teachers or other African-American male teachers, a study comparing and contrasting these populations is recommended. Future

researchers are urged to search for similarities and differences of African-American males and others to establish identifying factors to assist in recruiting and retaining more minority teachers to help in diversifying the elementary teaching profession.

Dissemination

A completed copy of the dissertation will be submitted to Dissertation Abstracts International. The researcher will publish in journal publications to ensure dissemination of the topic to a multitude of readers. The researcher will serve as a guest speaker at conferences and in programs geared toward recruiting African-American male elementary teachers. The researcher also welcomes the opportunity to disseminate the information to any person interested.

Concluding Thoughts

The overall goal of the researcher is to recruit and retain more African-American male teachers, specifically at the elementary level. Recruiting and retaining African-American male elementary teachers will help diversify teaching, and provide positive male influences for students lacking the presence of a male figure. The African-American male teacher is only part of the minority population needed to teach in elementary education.

The researcher was able to take the African-American male elementary teachers' lived experiences and explore their attractors, barriers, and perceived contributions. The male teachers were awed by the information and knowledge they were able to impart. The researcher's concluding thought: African-American male elementary teachers are essential in changing our educational system for both the students and the teaching force alike.

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APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER

My name is Chequita Franchon Brady, and I am a graduate student at Georgia Southern University working on my doctorate in Educational Administration. I am interested in exploring the perceptions of Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers to ascertain the attractors, barriers, and their perceived contributions to elementary education. The purpose of this research is to explore the attractors, barriers, and perceived contributions of African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia through their lived experiences in order to enhance the knowledge of potential African-American males, which can assist in an effective decision to become an elementary teacher. Participation in this research will include a qualitative interview. Interviews will be recorded using an audiotape recorder for the purpose of transcribing the information accurately. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and may be terminated at any time without risk or penalty.

Sincerely,

Chequita Brady

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

1. My name is Chequita Franchon Brady, and I am a graduate student at Georgia Southern University working on my doctorate in Educational Administration. I am interested in exploring the perceptions of Georgia's African-American male elementary teachers to ascertain the attractors, barriers, and their perceived contributions to elementary education.

2. Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research is to explore the attractors, barriers, and perceived contributions of African-American male elementary teachers in Georgia through their lived experiences in order to enhance the knowledge of potential African-American males, which can assist in an effective decision to become an elementary teacher. This information can be used by educators to provide insight for African-American male teachers at all levels, especially in the elementary sector.

3. Procedures to be followed:

Participation in this research will include a qualitative interview. Interviews will be recorded using an audiotape recorder for the purpose of transcribing the information accurately. The audiotaped information will be kept by the researcher in a locked and secure vault. The tapes will be transcribed, and then destroyed after May 10, 2008. The researcher will be responsible for scheduling all interviews that will take place in a neutral setting agreed upon by both parties. All participants have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the interview and may terminate the interview at anytime, or have any information deleted from the analysis.

4. Discomforts and Risks:

African-American male elementary teachers re-living their experiences can be sensitive for some. The sensitive interview questions may elicit slight embarrassment or may cause latent emotions related to certain events to re-emerge. Participants have the right to refuse to answer questions they are uncomfortable answering. If there are any questions or concerns about this

research, the researcher may be contacted at (706) 554-5125. If there are any questions about rights as the research participant in the study, those are directed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843 or e-mail ovrsight@georgiasouthern.edu.

5. Benefits:

a. The benefit to participants includes their ability to take part in a study that will possibly increase the knowledge base of how African-American males are attracted to elementary education, barriers to why they leave or never enter elementary education, and what unique attributes the African-American male elementary teacher has to contribute to the students, teachers, and community as a whole.

b. The benefit to society includes the possibility of gaining more knowledge about the experiences of males, particularly African-American males in elementary teaching. This study will be beneficial in producing perceptions of African-American male elementary teachers through exploring the attractors, barriers, and perceived contributions.

6. Duration/Time:

It will take between 45 to 90 minutes to complete the interview.

7. Statement of Confidentiality:

Participation and participants' names will be kept confidential. Copies of the study results are available upon participant's request.

8. Right to Ask Questions:

Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843.

9. Compensation:

Participants will not receive any monetary or other incentives for participating in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

10. Voluntary Participation:

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

A qualitative study of African-American male elementary teachers will be conducted to explore the lived experiences of African-American males teaching at the elementary level. In addition, other demographic data may be needed to help interpret information gained during this study; therefore, this demographic profile is included to help ascertain information that may not be revealed in the interview. Participants are asked to complete and return this form with the informed consent.

1. Age _____
2. Total years of teaching experience _____
3. Total years teaching in current
grade level _____
4. Grade level taught _____
5. Subject(s) taught _____
6. Degree held _____
7. Awards/Accolades _____
8. School location area
(i.e. rural, urban, suburban) _____
9. Number of students in school _____
10. Students' racial make-up _____
11. Students' socioeconomic status _____

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Briefly describe your K-12 educational experience.
2. How did being an African-American male influence your educational experiences?
3. Who or what were important influences in your life, particularly pertaining to education?
4. Discuss any challenges you may have faced during your k-12 experience.
5. Briefly describe your postsecondary experience.
6. Briefly explain why you chose to become an elementary teacher.
7. What aspects of education attracted you to become an elementary teacher?
8. Discuss recruiting tactics or special programs in which you are familiar.
9. Characterize your school's current situation and its position in the district/system.
10. Describe a typical day at the elementary school.
11. Are you content with your decision to become an elementary teacher?
12. Discuss any barriers to becoming a teacher, specifically an elementary teacher.
13. Discuss any doubts you may have had about becoming an elementary teacher.
14. How has your decision to become an elementary teacher been challenged by anyone?
15. What do you have to offer to the students at your school? and your school?
16. How do you contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of your fellow teachers and your school?
17. As an African-American male elementary teacher, describe your contributions to your community.
18. Discuss how your position as an African-American male elementary teacher has influenced other African-American males.

19. Discuss any suggestions to increase diversity in the teaching workforce, especially at the elementary level.
20. Would you make the decision to become an elementary teacher again?

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Phone: 912-681-0843 Veazey Hall 2021
P.O. Box 8005
Fax: 912-681-0719 IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu Statesboro, GA 30460
To: Chequita F. Brady
317 Bridge Taylor Road
Keysville, GA 30816
Cordelia Zinskie
P.O. Box 8144
CC: Charles E. Patterson
Associate Vice President for Research
From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)
Date: March 14, 2008

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research
After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H08186** and titled “**The Lived Experiences of African-American Male Elementary Teachers in Georgia**”, it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research. **This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,
Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer