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Antecedent Influences: Factors that Guide African American Men to the Field of Education

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ANTECEDENT INFLUENCES: FACTORS THAT GUIDE AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN TO THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

ANTECEDENT INFLUENCES: FACTORS THAT GUIDE AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN TO THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

by

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Over the last four decades black men have become increasingly underrepresented in all aspects of the teaching profession. Identifying the factors that influence African American men to enter or avoid the education field can help increase the recruitment of black men into the field of education. The dearth of black men in our classrooms can be reduced by collecting data as to the reasons that influence their decisions about the education field.

This qualitative study examined the experiences and perspectives of African American men serving as classroom teachers to identify common factors that may influence African Americans, in general, to enter the teaching field. The study also sought to identify barriers that African American men had to overcome in order to enter the teaching profession. This study was designed to collect participant experiences and perspectives through in-depth one-to-one interviews, through analysis of the interview responses to identify factors that influenced the participants to enter education and may help to address the issue of so few black men in America’s classrooms.
This dissertation study was guided by three main research questions: (1) What life experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession? (2) What educational experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession? (3) Once in the profession, what are the lived experiences of African American male teachers? The interview protocol developed for this study was intended to draw in-depth responses from study participants.

The field of education has and continues to draw among the fewest African American male graduates when compared with other professional fields; this is indicative of a challenge which requires greater investigation and study. The very nature of this study and the study population based on teachers who are African American men means race was an inescapable aspect of the research, requiring an approach that respects the racial, gender and cultural nature of such a study. The primary conceptual framework for this study was the Culturally Sensitive Research Framework.

Though our country’s student demographics increasingly represent a pluralistic, multicultural and multiracial society, the demographics of America’s teachers reflects little change. It has proven difficult to recruit more teachers of color into our schools, especially African American men. Qualitative one-to-one interviews enabled this study to ascertain the factors which impact the decisions of African American men who enter teaching careers, provide additional information on the subject and help to address the issue of low rates of black men teaching in America’s classrooms.
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I sincerely want to thank the members of my dissertation committee. I would especially like to thank Dr. James Crawford for his direction, encouragement and confidence in me as a researcher. Each time I wondered aloud with uncertainty you redirected doubt into focus on the next necessary steps. Thanks for teaching confluence as a process.

Dr. Rusch, thank you for the guidance you provided on a number of occasions. You are a true sage. Every time I sat down in your office you not only taught me something new, you also introduced additional paths for the research to follow and preeminent researchers. I wish to thank Dr. Hall for the thoughtful pushback and spirited debate. Dr. Hall forced me to consider multiple viewpoints before presenting my arguments. Dr. Hall’s work on Change has influenced my professional and personal life. Dr. Quinn offered insight and recommendations that helped highlight the crux of this study.

I would also like to thank the participants in my research. Each gentleman opened his life to me and shared their personal feelings on topics which can be very difficult to discuss.

This dissertation would not have been completed without the love and support of my wife, Kim. When our team approach to home life and raising our children had to give way to time for me to study, conduct research and write, she made everything work; Thank you.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Kim, for her love and unwavering support. We have grown smarter, wiser and continue to learn together.

To my mother, who taught me we can learn lessons from anyone. With her model of seeking knowledge and education in the face of life’s adversities, I’ve learned every dream is achievable.

To my children, Makayla, Malik and Marcus, for reminding me that no matter the pressures, taking time for family, love and fun is paramount.
PREFACE

Education can be the “great equalizer” of any society. Our society is noticeably divided along racial and ethnic lines; in essence, societies within a society. I have walked between two, sometimes three or four, different societies within our general society. The ability to navigate our sub-societies was developed while being raised within the military community. The Air Force, as with all military branches, exists as a pluralistic and multi-ethnic society in which members are required to outwardly respect every individual within the base community.

Dynamic separation occurs among the ranks based on those with college degrees (commissioned officers) and those without (Non-commissioned). My father was non-commissioned. The non-commissioned ranks consisted of men and women of many races, ethnicities and complexions. The commissioned ranks, during that time, didn’t represent the pluralism easily visible within the lower ranks. In a strange, yet beneficial placement, I was assigned to attend school with the children of commissioned officers. Officers’ families lived on the east side of the base, otherwise known as the old base and the non-commissioned families lived on the west side of the base, otherwise known as the new base. The two sides were separated by a two-lane highway. Due to municipal wrangling, only children from three streets on my side of the base went to school with the officers’ children; my street was one of them.

In my adolescent years I was forced to exist within this cultural dichotomy. As a young man, navigating the cultural, educational and economic variances of the educated versus less-educated military world I gained an appreciation for: diversity, discipline and most of all, education. Even though the overwhelming majority of the commissioned
officers were Caucasian, there were some among their ranks who represented minorities. While their numbers tended to be slight, there was one common factor that all officers shared, the completion of a college degree prior to entering the military. In this existence, higher education was the “great equalizer”.

Outside of the military upbringing, life was drawn clearly along racial lines of black and white. Add to the menagerie, I have also spent time interacting and living with Latino families, immersed in yet another culture or society. Within each of these groups, stratification existed on the basis of education. This repeating reality was noticed again during my International Student Teaching experience in Ghana, West Africa. In each society, I witnessed that education was the “great equalizer”. As an African American man, I have been inquisitive about the cultural and historical impediments to greater African American educational attainment.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Enlisting African American men to join the ranks of America’s teacher corps is a challenging endeavor. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics black men comprise only two percent of teachers nationwide, one out of every 50 teachers (U.S. Department of Education 2010). Twenty years ago, the projected need for elementary and secondary school teachers who are representative of the student populations led to increased appeals from government officials, including the President, and broadened the use of alternative licensure programs. Military officers, math and science professionals, bi-lingual speakers and recent college non-education graduates were all sought after recruits (U.S. Senate Hearing 1990) to help address this concern. Within the last two decades, the sought after groups have grown to include African American men.

In 2010, the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, elevated the clarion call to unprecedented significance by announcing the Department of Education has made the recruitment of African American men one of its top priorities (U.S. Department of Education 2010). In southern Nevada, the Clark County School District in 2012 employs 18,000 teachers, of which only 243 or 1.3% are African American men. The quandary will be to determine how to create an effective recruitment campaign which will result in a pipeline from which schools can recruit qualified African American men to teach in the classroom. One recruitment opportunity would rely on swaying black men in other professions to shift their careers to education. An alternative recruitment pipeline would
consist of persuading college students to choose education as their major. The question is where these black men, who are a dire absence in our classrooms, will come from. Ultimately, I sought answers to the existing quandary by asking questions of African American men who were in the teaching profession about their: experiences prior to teaching, experiences that led them to teaching and, in addition, their experiences as teachers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences and perspectives of African American men serving as classroom teachers to identify common factors that may influence African American men, in general, to enter the teaching field. The study also sought to identify barriers that African American men had to overcome in order to enter the teaching profession. This study was designed to collect participant experiences and perspectives through in-depth interviews, and through analysis of the interview responses to identify factors that influenced the participants to enter education and may help to address the issue of so few black men in America’s classrooms.

**Statement of the Problem**

Male teachers have often been identified as central to a reform agenda committed to addressing the problem of boys’ underachievement and male disaffection from school, which is frequently attributed to the feminization of teaching (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2009). The research is clear that having more black teachers in the teaching force could potentially improve a wide range of situations and needs of black students (Milner, 2006). Over the last four decades black men have become increasingly underrepresented
in the teaching profession. Identifying the factors that influence African American men to enter or avoid the education field can help increase the recruitment of black men into the field of education. The dearth of black men in our classrooms can be reduced by collecting data as to the reasons that influence their decisions to enter the education field.

**Conceptual Framework**

This study was guided by the Culturally Sensitive Research Framework; the qualitative research approach developed by Linda C. Tillman. Statistics regarding African American men in professions which require a college degree indicate an educational system that in tandem with various other factors, fails at preparing those men for academic success. The fact that the field of education has and continues to draw among the fewest African American male graduates when compared with other professional fields, is indicative of a challenge which require greater investigation and study. With so many professional, educational and economic options dependent on academic achievement, the importance of having teachers who may have a positive effect on student achievement cannot be understated. This study gathered insight directly from African American men who were currently teaching; more studies on this topic may aid policy makers and educators in addressing the disparity among the ranks of America’s teachers.

The very nature of this study and its study population prioritized on teachers who are African American men means race is an inescapable aspect of the research. The Culturally Sensitive Research Framework guides research which not only recognizes race and ethnicity, but position culture as central to the research process. Culture is “a group’s
individual and collective ways of thinking, believing, and knowing, which includes their shared experiences, consciousness, skills, values, forms of expression, social institutions, and behaviors” (Tillman, 2006)

The framework for conducting culturally sensitive research is built upon five tenets. The first requires that the research will utilize qualitative research methods. This study employed the use of interviews, field notes and reflective journaling. The second tenet is that the research approach uses the particular and unique self-defined experiences of African Americans. Culturally sensitive research approaches attempt to reveal, understand and respond to unequal power relations that may minimize, marginalize, subjugate or exclude the multiple realities and knowledge bases of African Americans. This framework positions the experiential knowledge of African Americans as legitimate, appropriate and necessary for analyzing, understanding and reporting data. The Culturally Sensitive Research Framework uses culturally sensitive research approaches which can lead to the generation of theories and practices that are intended to address the culturally specific circumstances of the lives of African Americans (Tillman, 2006).

**Research Questions**

There are three main research questions guiding this study:

1. What life experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession?

2. What educational experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession?
3. Once in the profession, what are the lived experiences of African American male teachers?

**Research Design and Methodology**

**Design**

This study sought to collect the life experiences of African American men who were classroom teachers and document their perceptions related to their experiences. A qualitative interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers (Creswell, 2008). The following questions were developed to guide the interviews:

1. What motivated and influenced you to become a classroom teacher?

2. What familial, social and academic supports did you have while completing your educational attainments?

3. What characterizes African American men in the teaching field from African American men in other professions?

4. How do your perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American influence your professional interactions in the classroom?
Participants

Participants were selected from among African American men teaching in the Clark County School District or public charter schools within Clark County, Nevada. The intent of this study is to document the experiences of African American men who teach. Nine men were selected who, I believed, would provide a wealth of experience and information. For the study I used purposeful sampling which sets a standard of choosing participants who are “information rich” or help the researcher to understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2008).

Procedure

Data collection was preceded by utilizing purposeful sampling to identify 9 African American men currently teaching in the Clark County School District and public charter schools within Clark County, Nevada. The purposeful sampling strategy included the use of network sampling for the selection of charter school participants. In depth interviews were conducted with participants, with the intention of collecting significant information and perceptions to further code and analyze responses for the identification of common factors that contributed to the participants’ decisions to enter the education field.

Significance of the Study

Though our country’s student demographics increasingly represent a pluralistic, multicultural and multiracial society, the demographics of America’s teachers reflects little change. It has proven difficult to recruit more teachers of color into our schools, especially African American men. Qualitative research methods will enable this study to
ascertain the factors which impact the decisions of African American men who enter teaching careers. The data analysis of the study participants’ interview responses provided additional information to the existing research and helped to address the issue of low rates of black men teaching in America’s classrooms.

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

This study concentrated on collecting information by interviewing African American men teaching in Clark County, Nevada. It was a major assumption of the study that participants who self-identified their racial identity as African American were actually within that demographic. A limitation to this study occurred from reliance on the responses provided by participants to be honest and based on their experiences in their career(s) and professional decisions. Another limitation of the study could have been caused by collecting responses which didn’t have applicability or transferability to teachers within schools across all types of structures, locales and environments. An additional limitation may have arisen from the researcher applying personal inclinations or bias during analysis. The study was delimited by the number of participants accessed for the study. A natural delimitation of the study develops by the research being concentrated on African American men only.
**Definition of Terms**

*Disenfranchised*- to deprive of a franchise, of a legal right, or of some privilege or immunity.

*Disproportionate*- being out of proportion; especially when comparing the population of African Americans to the total population.

*Culturally responsive*- using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Geneva Gay).

*Culturally relevant*- pedagogy that recognizes the diverse cultural characteristics of students from different ethnic backgrounds and adjusts teaching methods to account for this diversity.

*Interventions*- the act of mediating someone through a challenge or crossroads

*Resilience*- the ability to recover from adversity

*Role Model hypothesis*- individuals compare themselves with reference groups of people who occupy the social role to which the individual aspires (Robert K. Merton).

*Self-fulfilling prophecy*- a concept developed by Robert K. Merton to explain how a belief or expectation, whether correct or not, affects the outcome of a situation or the way a person (or group) will behave.
**Organization of the Dissertation**

The complete dissertation will be comprised of 5 chapters. The first chapter will provide an introduction to the study. The second chapter will consist of a literature review related to African American men and their involvement in education. Chapter 3 will contain the methodological approach for the study. Chapter 4 will delineate the analysis of the data and the findings from the study. Chapter 5 will present the findings, themes and researcher reflections from the study. The sixth chapter will offer a summary, conclusions and recommendations for the study. An appendix will be included in addition to the six chapters.

**Summary**

African American men have been a part of the American fabric since the foundation of early America yet; there are a miniscule number of teachers who are African American men. Qualitative research methods will guide this study to ascertain the factors which impact the decisions of African American men who enter teaching careers. Qualitative research interviews will give the participants the ability to voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings. (Glesne, 2008) The data analysis of the study participants’ interview responses will provide additional information to that which exist presently and will help to address the issue of low rates of black men teaching in America’s classrooms.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of man, - the balance-wheel of the social machinery.” Horace Mann delivered his powerful statement in 1848 to underscore the prospect of education as an agent in raising the comportment of anyone in American society. On the one hand, Horace Mann’s words were based on high principals similar to those of our founding documents including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. On the other hand, those documents also weren’t originally intended for application to African Americans. Four years later, Mann said that “in intellect, the blacks are inferior to the whites” (Kaestle, 1983). Our society continues to profess the impact education can have on improving the life of each individual member yet; the educators most frequently participating in the discourse on educational development aren’t proportionally commensurate with the racial and ethnic demographics of the students in their classrooms, schools and districts.

It is my contention that the problems that plague America’s levels of educational achievement when compared to other developed nations, will not rise to the levels enjoyed when America led the world in industry, education, and economics, until the cadres of American teachers and administrators are reflective of the pluralist variety of the students who attend our schools. In other words, if America’s schools are expected to produce better performing students, America’s teachers should be representative of the multi-ethnic, multi-racial, pluralistic people that make-up our society. The voices of
minorities in America need to be heard, and they need to be involved in delivering the long-term solutions. This study will focus on a very small population within the whole of American teachers, African American men. By interviewing this population they may provide an outlook or perceptions that may not have been considered before.

To achieve the parity I’ve described, policy makers, administrators and educators will need to develop a value for insights that can only be gained by listening to the voices of those historically disenfranchised from educational policy and decision making. They cannot be overlooked. This study is intended to add to existing knowledge on the subject and help with the dilemma James Earl Davis describes,

“Unfortunately, these sporadic attempts to disentangle the complexities of the Black male “problem” may be futile unless more is known about how and why education is important to and understood by those who are often marginalized by schools that offer both barriers and hope for their futures. (Davis, 2009)

The Void Created By Disenfranchisement

As one of the historically disenfranchised groups, African Americans have attempted solutions to their educational needs with those solutions ranging from self-reliant solutions to being the recipients of benevolent contributions to their uplift from other races and nationalities. The historical challenge for addressing the educational needs of African Americans has been further exacerbated by the limited number of black teachers. “W.E.B. Dubois could not imagine a successful system of common schools nor even good trade and industrial schools without an adequate supply of well-educated teachers, as well as teachers of teachers” (Ravitch, 2000, p.40).

A result of the Brown v Board decision of 1954 to integrate schools, the following 20 years after the decision ushered the dismissal of 35,000 black teachers in the South. In
the ten year period from 1975-1985 black students who selected education as a major decreased by 66%. The 5 year period from 1984-1989 a change in certification requirements and teacher education program requirements resulted in another loss of 21,515 African American teachers (Tillman, 2004). In the 21st century African Americans are attending colleges and universities in greater numbers than ever before; yet, the struggle for filling the education pipeline with qualified African American classroom teachers remains a boding challenge.

When purveying the challenge of attracting more African American graduates to the field of education a glaring disparity is evident. Black men are rare as classroom teachers. Often when I conduct informal surveys by asking people how many black men they had as a teacher from Kindergarten through 12th grade, the answer is none or one, at the most. This is a serious deficit that should be brought to greater societal attention. I believe this disparity once addressed, can have a direct positive effect on school achievement, particularly for African American children. The greatest impact may be on black boys.

Filling the void of black male teachers is and will be an enormous challenge. One only needs to consider the statistics and data available on African American men to understand the difficulty of what I’ve proposed. The pipeline of African American men from those about to leave high school to those with the potential to become licensed classroom teachers, are limited to extremely low. The efforts must start with the question where are the African American men?
Current Demographics for African American Men

The 2010 United States Census established the national population at 308,745,538. The Census Bureau estimated the African American population at 12.9% of the overall population, or numerically 39,828,174. Of the African American population, there are 15,010,000 persons 16 years of age and older; black males aged 16 and over number 6,865,000 compared to 8,145,000 for black women aged 16 and over. With the population of nearly 7 million African American men in the United States in 2010, identifying trends and behavior patterns based on current statistics is a compulsory task to establish the pool of African American men who could potentially enter the field of education. Specifically, we must determine what happens to black men when they enter adulthood? How do their numbers disaggregate following high school academically, professionally and socially?

The Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics estimated in 2010 that only 47% of African American men (approximately 3,226,500) graduated from high school (NCES, 2010). From the black men who graduate from high school, only 37% (approximately 1,193,824) matriculate 4-year colleges. The data indicates that obtaining a Bachelor’s degree is similarly as difficult as earning a high school diploma. In 2006, more than two-thirds (67.6 percent) of black men who started college did not graduate within 6 years—the lowest completion rate among both sexes and all racial/ethnic groups in higher education (Harper, 2006). Approximately, 393,962 black men complete their undergraduate degree.
In the developing pattern of decreasing graduation rates as the level of education rises, Graduate colleges see the lowest numbers of African American men in the formal academic setting. African Americans account for 6.6% of the overall population with advanced degrees. Master’s degrees have been earned by 3% of black men (approximately 11,819) and only 2.1% of black men (approximately 8,773) have achieved doctoral degrees. While the educational attainments of African American men are low when compared to the overall statistics of the national population, historically, many of these numbers are higher than ever.

Demographics of Professional African American Men

Professionally, black men have excelled to some of the most distinguished positions in business, industry and politics. Yet, the statistics above demonstrate the challenges faced by African American men to reach the pinnacles of the professional world. Among the members of Fortune 500 Chief Executive Officers cohort at publicly traded corporations, 1%, are African American men (BlackEntrepreneurProfile.com). Don Thompson became the newest black C.E.O. when he was selected in March to head the McDonald’s corporation. Clarence Otis Jr. has been the C.E.O. of Darden Restaurants since November 2004. Kenneth Chenault is the C.E.O. of American Express. Rodney O’Neal is the top executive of Delphi, and Kenneth Frazier is the Chief Executive of Merck & Co.

It’s important to note the educational attainments of these men; their careers are buoyed by outstanding experiences while three of the four hold Juris Doctorate degrees from Stanford and Harvard. Rodney O’Neal earned a Master’s degree from Stanford.
Ursula Burns, C.E.O. of Xerox, the first African American female C.E.O., completes the group of 6 African American, Fortune 500 C.E.O.s. Additionally, Roger Ferguson is the top executive at privately held TIAA-CREF.

The percentage of African American men in non-education professional fields is only slightly higher than those of the Fortune 500 Chief Executives. According to the National Science Foundation, in 2006 black men accounted for two percent of the total engineers in the United States (NSF, 2011). In the same year, 16,095 African American men were practicing physicians; they were just under two-percent of the total doctors in the country (Association of American Medical Colleges, 2004). There are less than 2% of black men practicing law nationwide, compared with 57.4% of white males.

**Demographics of African American Men in Politics**

In the world of politics, the presence of African Americans exists contrary to socio-historical context. Before being elected the first African American President of the United States, Barack Obama served as only the fifth ever African American in the Senate. Barack Obama’s appointed Senate replacement, Roland Burris, became the sixth African American to hold a Senate seat. Colin Powell, the 65th Secretary of State for the United States, was the first African American to ever hold this position. During the history of the position, 2% of the time has it been held by an African American. Colin Powell is also the only African American to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, holding the Chairman position.

During the history of the United States, only four African American men have been elected as a state Governor. P.B.S. Pinchback was the first, serving in the state of
Louisiana. Douglas Wilder achieved the feat in 1990, serving until 1994. David Patterson became the 55th Governor of New York in 2008, completing just two years of State leadership in 2010. Deval Patrick is fulfilling his second term as Governor of Massachusetts after being elected to his first term in 2006 (Wikipedia). African American service as public representatives in government has had much higher participation on the state and local government levels than on the national level. Those higher levels of participation still aren’t proportionate to the African American population. There is one arm of the U.S. Government which has black men serving in leadership capacities at higher rates than those professional fields previously discussed—the U.S. Military.

**Contrarian Demographics for African American Men:**

**Military**

In contrast to the aforementioned statistics in other professional fields, there is a noticeably higher representation of black men in the military and in its officer ranks. The United States military, according to U.S. Department of Defense data, employs 2.6 million Americans in active service. 17%, approximately 442,000, of the active duty total population serving in the military are African American. Blacks constitute 9% of the officers in the Armed Forces, leadership positions which require a college degree; however, only 5.6% of general officers, with the top ranks of General or admiral, are African American (Fletcher, 2010).

Military statistics for African American men constitute disproportionately greater numbers comprised in the overall national population. Therefore, in this arena, some
professional sports, and unfortunately, prison, black men have an overrepresentation (higher percentages than that of the general black population compared to the total national population) in the data.

**Sports**

In a recent television commercial from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the organization claimed that its black male athletes have a graduation rate higher than the graduation rate of black men who attend Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). While this may be true, the commercial doesn’t state the actual graduation rates for either entity mentioned in the commercial. Both the NCAA and HBCUs have dismal graduation rates, below 60%. In 2010, the NCAA Graduation Success Rate for African American male athletes was 59%. (NCAA.org, 2010)

HBCUs have increased their graduation rates over the last fifteen years to the current rate of 35%. (JBHE, 2011) These statistics are very important because similar to the military, the NCAA and HBCUs receive larger numbers of African American men who have graduated from high school. At 46,701, black men represent almost 19% of the total male athletes in the NCAA. Through a closer look at three particular sports, the overrepresentation of black men is glaring. In Division I basketball, black men comprise 61% of the players; in football, black men are 46% of the players; and in track, 54% of the athletes are African American men.

The disproportionate representation in some sports is expected to continue, as many of the black men matriculating to the pinnacle of their sports are recruited while
still in high school. Black men have become the majority of players in professional football and basketball. The 2008 statistics for the NFL estimate 1,762 African American men are players in the league. They are an overwhelming majority of the players, 67% of the league total. Black men have an even higher percentage of the players in the NBA, making up 77% of the 450 players in the elite league (Prezi.com). Additionally, black men have overrepresentation in Major League Baseball, at 15%. These are remarkable statistics considering that there weren’t any African Americans allowed to play in the professional “white” NFL, NBA and MLB until 1944, 1949 and 1946, respectively. (www.science.smith.edu).

African American men have subsequently occupied more coaching positions in the NFL, NBA and MLB. Black men now constitute approximately 22% of the head coaches in the NFL. Of the 30 head coaching positions in the NBA, black men comprise one-third of their ranks. Five of the 30 managers (17%) in Major League Baseball are black. (wiki.answers.com)

Penal System

One area of life activity in which African American men are overrepresented is the percentage of black prison inmates nationally. The number of black men in prison hovers near 850,000 inmates, which is nearly 41% of the total prison population (West 2010). Of the total black male population, 4.7 percent are in prison, while approximately 6.3% of the black male population is enrolled in institutions of higher education (Toldson & Morton, 2011). These statistics dispel the oft repeated statement, “there are more black men in prison than in college”. However, the high overrepresentation of black men
in prison represents a potential resource for developing African American male teachers. Imagine if we, as educators, were able to teach black boys to become productive adult citizens conversely to entering prison; what type of positive impact would that have on American industry, education and economics?

**Challenges African American Men Face When Choosing Education as a Profession?**

America’s classrooms are a pluralistic reflection of the multiethnic, multiracial, and multilingual society today’s children exist in. The ranks of our country’s teacher demographics are contrary to those of the student population. The projected growth in the size and diversity of the student population, the aging and increasingly gender-imbalanced teaching population, and high teacher attrition rates all contribute to the serious need for new teachers, and especially for teachers who reflect the national diversity (Brown & Butty, 1999).

Teaching is still an overwhelmingly female represented occupation. The profession is also strikingly White, but there is some shift toward more people of color entering the ranks of teaching. Hispanics are the fastest growing non-White group entering teaching. Despite much attention and some effort to get more males into K-12 teaching, the public school teaching force in the United States continues to get more female. Eighty-four percent of public school teachers are female (NCEI, 2011).

Efforts have been under way for decades to increase the number of men serving as teachers. The exertion to attract greater numbers of men has been met with a decrease of men in the classroom. Alternative preparation routes produce a higher proportion of male teachers. Twenty-two percent of teachers coming through alternate routes are men,
compared with 16 percent of teachers coming from the traditional route (NCEI, 2011). When comparing the statistics related to gender there is a stark contrast. Further statistical disaggregation of the male ranks of America’s teachers highlights an additional void.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics African American men comprise only two percent of American teachers, (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2010). One of every 50 teachers in America is a black man. In 2010, the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, elevated the clarion call to unprecedented significance by announcing the Department of Education has made the recruitment of African American men one of its top priorities (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2010).

The annals of scholarly research contain only a modicum of studies whose primary focus is that of African American men in education. Compounding this dearth of research on the subject, the literature rarely addresses the factors that influence African American male teachers’ education and career aspirations (Brown & Butty, 1999). Additionally, much of the literature written and studies conducted regarding men in education has originated in the international arena. Thus, the literature purveyed here will address men in general, and when applicable, address specific challenges to African American men.

Men interested in education must first be willing to refute lingering societal influences before considering teaching. In the U.S.A., teaching began as a male occupation; by the late 1800s social changes had occurred that resulted in more women in teaching. Starting at that time, college teaching and school administration became major reasons for men to leave classroom teaching (Kaestle, 1983). Additionally, the
perception of teaching, especially elementary teaching, as a domestic activity fed and was fed by the growing number of women teachers. Domestic images, low pay and status, and the tendency for more married females to be employed combined to make elementary teaching at present a feminized profession in the U.S.A. (Clifford, 1989). Similar factors may influence men away from certain occupations that they might otherwise choose, after controlling for historical and psychological differences. Men, who may have direct, aggressive, and monetarily-determined career goals, have psychological prohibitions against choosing professions typically perceived as female dominated (DeCorse, 1997).

African American men are one category of people who have faced regular stereotypes and reduced expectation for performance based on those stereotypes. The lingering effects of stereotypes and lowered expectations may result in African American men avoiding the field of education.

Stereotype threat: the event of a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs becoming self-relevant, usually as a plausible interpretation for something one is doing, for an experience one is having, or for a situation one is in, that has relevance to one's self-definition. It happens when one is in the field of the stereotype. (Steel, 1997)

Claude Steele’s Stereotype Threat has application to the low numbers of African American men choosing to enter the field of education because one stereotyped group, black men, would be considering entering another stereotyped group, teachers; a group in which African American men don’t have a traditional presence. While Stereotype Threat “refers to the strictly situational threat of negative stereotypes”, the thought can be enough to drive black men away from the teaching field.
Increasing the availability of male role models to children (in all age groups) across the primary sector may help to break down enduring gender stereotypes, by conveying an unequivocal message-to children and parents alike-that learning is ‘an acceptable masculine activity’ (Carrington et al., 2008). Characterizing the classroom teacher as female, subservient, and second-rate makes it unlikely that males will choose teaching, even when predisposed to do so. Males often resist their initial motives and inclination to work with children until they have explored other avenues, tried other majors and occupations, often on the advice of their parents (DeCorse 1997).

African American men who enter the field of education face a number of challenges as classroom teachers, not the least of which is financial. They must enter the field aware that teaching is not a career offering great economic rewards (Gerson, 1993). In the past decade, males have begun choosing careers stressing service to society and personal satisfaction over extrinsic rewards such as money and prestige. Some men have become disillusioned with traditional male professions and attracted to less lucrative, but more personally satisfying, lines of work. Men have become more involved in child rearing discovering how much pleasure they can derive from caring for children. Generally, for these participants, intrinsic reward and personal satisfaction have replaced earlier perceptions of financial security (DeCorse, 1997).

Much of the literature written on the subject of men in education has been written to confront and negate the rationale provided by policy makers, parents and educators for why African American children are not achieving at higher rates in U.S. school systems. Lahelma (2000) argues in her work that the recruitment efforts to increase male teachers should not be based on the premise of providing modeling for boys. Arguing for the need
for more male teachers in schools is often united with concern about boys’ problems in schools (Epstein et al, 1998) or with boys’ need of male models (Lahelma, 2000). It was widely held that masculinity itself is at the root of this [the notion that male teachers would be “better for boys” and that boys need to connect with this: “It’s the macho image of a male teacher, I think, [that] would appeal to the boys” (Jones, 2006).

The literature presents cases to establish the need for men as teachers based on altruistic characteristics rather than unsubstantiated claims that men in the classroom will have an effect on student behavior, student achievement or inherent improvement in the quality of instruction. Women and schoolchildren have been the subject of research studies to discern their attitudes toward and expectations of men as teachers. As Deborah Jones summarized in her 2006 study, “women are influenced by discourses constructing men as balancing out women in society. Discourses of the primacy of nuclear families containing strongly heterosexual men are prevalent. Women seem to articulate and be trapped within essentialist discourses, positioning men as better at sport and discipline, thus promoting traditional views of masculinity.”

The fact that males were viewed as someone boys choose to form relationships with, adds to those who call for males to act as role models (Harris and Barnes, 2009). In Bruce Carrington’s 2007 study he surmised, “From the children’s standpoint, the gender of the teacher was largely immaterial. Our study indicates that simplistic and unsupported claims about the benefits of gender matching should have no place in driving either education policy or practice.” The fact that children almost exclusively identified roles that both genders fulfill indicated that having a male-female teaching team can be viewed as a positive experience for the children in these types of settings and
may encourage more men into the profession (Harris & Barnes, 2009). “Notions of ‘matching’ pupils and teachers by gender to reduce boys’ disaffection with schooling and improve their achievement have been challenged by research findings. Leaving aside the point that boys are not a homogenous group (having distinct identities based on ‘race’, social class sexuality, and a host of other factors besides gender), and so could never be expected to behave in uniform ways, there is evidence that teacher gender simply is not a point of concern for pupils.” (Francis et al, 2008) Many of the studies with concentration on men as teachers focus on debunking a number of the widely accepted rationales for the increased recruitment of men as teachers. We recognize the importance of contemporary measure to make teaching a more inclusive profession and accept that attempts to bolster male (or ethnic minority) recruitment can be justified on other (arguable less pragmatic) grounds (Carrington et al., 2008).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The voices of black men have been marginalized within the discourse on teachers and teaching (Lynn, 2001). A possible cause of the dearth of black male teachers may arise from the exclusion of their standpoint from the discourse on educational development to find and create solutions to educational challenges. In other words, the problematic void of African American men in education may stem from said men not being included as part of the solution. Comparable to the scarcity of African American teachers in the classroom, there is a dearth of research on the subject of black men in the classroom. The literature rarely addresses the factors that influence African American male teachers’ education and career aspirations (Brown & Butty, 1999). The Culturally Sensitive Research Framework uses culturally sensitive research approaches which can lead to the generation of theories and practices that are intended to address the culturally specific circumstances of the lives of African Americans (Tillman, 2006).

Culturally sensitive research approaches attempt to reveal, understand and respond to unequal power relations that may minimize, marginalize, subjugate or exclude the multiple realities and knowledge bases of African Americans. The framework for conducting culturally sensitive research first requires that the research will utilize qualitative research methods. This study will use interviews, field notes and reflective journaling. The research approach uses the particular and unique self-defined experiences of African Americans. This framework positions the experiential knowledge
of African Americans as legitimate, appropriate and necessary for analyzing, understanding and reporting data (Tillman, 2006).

The very nature of this study and its study participants prioritized on teachers who are African American men means race is an inescapable aspect of the research. The Culturally Sensitive Research Framework guides research which not only recognizes race and ethnicity, but position culture as central to the research process. Culture is “a group’s individual and collective ways of thinking, believing, and knowing, which includes their shared experiences, consciousness, skills, values, forms of expression, social institutions, and behaviors” (p.266). The Culturally Sensitive Research Framework requires the use of approaches designed to respect the African American community and culture.

Part of the requisite methodology for conducting culturally sensitive research compels the researcher to be conscious of the various positions may have in relationship to the community. This sense of researcher consciousness was built upon earlier work on culturally sensitive research approaches. James A. Banks typology for researchers who conduct cross-cultural studies (See Table 1) is a prominent underpinning of the Culturally Sensitive Research Framework.
Table 1

*A Typology of Cross-Cultural Researchers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Researcher</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The indigenous-insider</td>
<td>This individual endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who can speak with authority about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The indigenous-outsider</td>
<td>This individual was socialized within his or her indigenous community but has experienced high levels of cultural assimilation into an outsider or oppositional culture. The values, beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge of this individual are identical to those of the outside community. The indigenous-outsider is perceived by indigenous people in the community as an outsider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The external-insider</td>
<td>This individual was socialized within another culture and acquires its beliefs, values, behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge. However, because of his or her unique experiences, the individual rejects many of the values, beliefs, and knowledge claims within his or her indigenous community and endorses those of the studied community. The external-insider is viewed by the new community as an &quot;adopted&quot; insider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The external-outsider</td>
<td>The external-outsider is socialized within a community different from the one in which he or she is doing research. The external-outsider has a partial understanding of and little appreciation for the values, perspectives, and knowledge of the community he or she is studying and consequently often misunderstands and misinterprets the behaviors within the studied community.</td>
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African American men who were currently teaching in the classroom are the intended participant group for this study. As the researcher is also African American, a former teacher and a long-time resident of Clark County, Nevada, I am conducting this culturally sensitive research from the position of an indigenous-insider. This position assumes culturally specific knowledge which will have to be tempered against researcher bias during data interpretation.

This study was designed on the 5 tenets of Tillman’s Culturally Sensitive Research Framework. 1) This is culturally sensitive research which will use qualitative methods, including in-depth, structured interviews. The researcher will keep a reflective journal for side stories and post interview thoughts. 2) The researcher will use his culturally specific knowledge to “maintain the cultural integrity of the participants and participant community when presenting the research. 3) The researcher will not impose thoughts or theories on the study that will restrict or marginalize the cultural perspectives of the participant interviews, data analysis, study findings or presentation of the research. This is defined as cultural resistance to theoretical dominance. 4) The study and research presentation will demonstrate the utmost regard for the participants and their community while reinforcing the participants’ cultural legitimacy and standpoint. Culturally sensitive data interpretation is an essential tenet of the Culturally Sensitive Research Framework. 5) This study will place the participants at the center of the data interpretation and the findings will be based on their contributions. The information they provided will be the foundation for any culturally informed theory and practices that may arise from this study.
Analysis of the study’s data and ensuing interpretation of the results was guided in the vein of Hermeneutics. This approach seeks to achieve making meaning; the goal of a hermeneutic approach is to seek understanding, rather than to offer explanation or to provide an authoritative reading or conceptual analysis of a text (Kinsella, 2006). The hermeneutic intention of concentrating on the words of the participant and less on explanation from the researcher served as a method to reduce the potential for biased interpretation on my part.

**Research Questions**

There were three main research questions guiding this study:

1. What life experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession?

2. What educational experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession?

3. Once in the profession, what are the lived experiences of African American male teachers?

The Interview Protocol (See Appendix B) consisted of 18 questions developed to get at the heart of the participants’ life, educational and professional experiences.
Design of the Study

This study sought to collect the life experiences of African American men who are classroom teachers and document their perceptions related to their experiences. A qualitative interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers (Creswell, 2008). The qualitative aspect of the interview process will add the participants “unconstrained experiences and perspectives”.

Participants

All participants within the study sample were from the Clark County School District and public charter schools within Clark County, Nevada. Charter school participants included 4 teachers from three different charter schools in the county. These participants were selected through the use of network sampling.

The participants from CCSD were garnered through a slightly different process than the charter school participants. The participants from CCSD were selected using homogenous purposeful random sampling from among 202 classroom teachers self-identified as African American. Homogenous sampling purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics. (Creswell, 2008) Eight potential participants were selected and similar to the charter school participants contacted via email.

Based on their indication of willingness, 5 participants were selected to become part of the study sample. When these participants were combined with the charter school participants an even number of participants fell within the elementary, middle and high school grade levels; three teachers represented each level. All participants were selected
on the basis of meeting the required criteria: self-described African American men, teaching currently in a public school in Clark County, Nevada.

The study sample was chosen from the population of teachers actively teaching in public schools. The self-described African American teachers selected for the study represent schools in neighborhoods from geographically and economically diverse sections of Las Vegas. As of the spring of 2012, the study participants were teachers responsible for instruction. Clark County School District counselors, psychologist and learning strategist were removed as potential study sample participants as they were not primarily classroom instructors.
Table 2

Antecedent Influences Participant Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Level / Subject Grade</th>
<th>Years in Field</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Home State</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Family SES</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Yrs For BS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jim Booker</td>
<td>HS/JROTC 9-12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>U. of Md. E. Shore</td>
<td>Bio.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudy Stanley</td>
<td>HS/ENG. 9-12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>UNLV</td>
<td>Edu.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Walker</td>
<td>HS/SPEC. EMOT.CH</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>GA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Med.</td>
<td>U. of Mont.</td>
<td>Poli. Sci.</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron Chisolm</td>
<td>MS/Math (*TFA)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>Comp. Sci.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry Williams</td>
<td>MS/ENG.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Fordham</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Robinson</td>
<td>MS/SCI.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Med.</td>
<td>BYU Idaho</td>
<td>Hist. &amp; Sci.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Morgan</td>
<td>ES/3rd</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>NV</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Med.</td>
<td>UNLV</td>
<td>Edu.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendrick Washington</td>
<td>ES/ 4TH (TFA)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Fisk</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald Drew</td>
<td>ES/5th</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>NV</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>UNLV</td>
<td>Comm</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

One-to-one interviews were conducted with each of the 9 selected study participants. The interviews consist of 18 open-ended questions allowing participants to provide open-ended responses unconstrained by the perspectives of the researcher or past research findings (Creswell, 2008). Interviews were digitally recorded through the use of a smart pen and a separate digital recorder. The researcher also took brief written notes in addition to responses to the interview protocol. The researcher asked elaborating or clarifying subsequent probe questions to elicit more information from the participants. The recordings were transcribed, analyzed and coded, and then the findings will be provided.

The first process to occur after the interviews were completed was transcription. The transcribed interviews were reviewed and offered to the participants for review, or member checking. Each of the transcriptions was read again and highlighted for key statements and information. All of the interviews were then aggregated by question order. For example, every response to question number four were placed together and printed.

This sorted group of responses was then re-read and color-coded by hand. I wrote codes in the margins of the reprinted, aggregated interviews. With the coding completed I categorized the codes. From the categories, a number of themes were identified, and then I narrowed those themes to the eight that would be reported as findings.
Significance of the Study

Though our country’s student demographics increasingly represent a pluralistic, multicultural and multiracial society, the demographics of America’s teachers reflects little change. It has proven difficult to recruit more teachers of color into our schools. Even though African American men have been a part of the American fabric since the foundation of early America, a confounding miniscule number of teachers are African American men. Qualitative research methods enabled this study to ascertain the factors which impact the decisions of African American men who enter teaching careers. The data analysis of the study participants’ interview responses has provided additional information to that which exists presently and will help to address the issue of so few black men in America’s classrooms.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation to this study occurs from reliance on the responses provided by participants to be honest and based on their experiences in their career(s) and professional decisions. Another limitation of the study may have been caused by collecting responses which don’t have applicability or transferability to schools and students across all types of school structures, locales and environments. An additional limitation may have arisen from the researcher applying personal inclinations or bias during analysis. The study is delimited by the number of participants accessed for the study. A natural delimitation of the study develops by the research being concentrated on African American men only.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: TEACHER PERCEPTIONS AND LIVED EXPERIENCES

The purpose of this study was to identify common factors shared by the study participants that were influential in choosing teaching as a career. This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews conducted with the participation of nine subjects who taught public school. Chapter 4 is an overview of the participants in this study. This chapter also provides participant narratives and their responses to questions from the interview protocol. Categories and themes emerged from the data provided by participants. The categories are discussed at the end of this chapter prior to the summary.

Background Factors

The differences among participants’ lived experiences or personal factors provided background factors that reinforce the supposition that every person has an individual story to tell that should be valued. Two teachers within the study are considered novice teachers because they have taught less than three years. The remaining 7 teachers have taught within a range of 4 to 18 years. Their institutional factors and social supports also present broad heterogeneous experiences. While the study participants were based on belonging to a primarily homogenous grouping, the participants offered diversity beyond expectation for the study. In the succeeding paragraphs participant narratives will describe the individual stories.
Participant Narratives

Five of the teachers stated they came from low socioeconomic family resources while one of those insisted his family was very poor. Three identified their family’s income level as middle income or socioeconomic status. One participant indicated that his family’s socioeconomic status increased from medium to high economic during his youth. The family structure varied amongst the participants. Three of the participants were raised in single parent households and one grew up with divorced parents. Four participants were raised in dual parent households with a mother and father makeup. One participant was raised in a two parent household by adoptive parents. Eight of the 9 participants’ family structures reflected what one participant described as “kind of complicated”. Three men were raised in the Northeast region of the United States, one from the South, two from the Midwest and three were raised on the West coast. Each narrative will tell the story about the participant’s life; including their family background and their educational and work experiences prior to teaching. The narratives will also describe their professional lived experiences as a classroom teacher.

Jim Booker

Jim Booker is a Junior ROTC teacher with CCSD at a school in the south part of Las Vegas. He is 58 years old from Morgansa, Maryland. He earned his Bachelor’s degree from the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore and has been a teacher for the last eight years.

Morgansa, Maryland is a rural area just about 45 minutes south of Washington D.C. Jim grew up in a financially poor family made up of his mom, dad and 7 siblings; 6
brothers and one sister. Jim described himself as a B student and maintained about the same average, a 3.2, during his undergraduate years. When asked to describe his study skills, Jim replied,

I probably grasped things pretty quickly; I didn't have any great study skills. I was pretty much involved in sports a lot and in order to play sports you had to get good grades and that was my motivation.

Growing up and in high school Jim played football, basketball, baseball and track. “Every season I was doing something, kept me out of trouble.” Jim was asked to what his freshman year in high school through Bachelor’s degree educational experience was like.

I was in the pre-college curriculum program. I think I got a great education. That led to me going to the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore with a…earned a BS in biology and later on I got a Masters in Health Care Administration from Chapman University.

He earned his Bachelor’s degree in 4 years and his Master’s took about 6 years to complete. Jim did not get much support from his family while going to school.

I'd say none. My father was, back in the day, I think he only got through about fourth grade. My mother went to Catholic school and at that time they were all-black schools I think she only went through eighth grade.

Jim said his family did little to encourage him toward his educational endeavors. “I did it on my own.” His response when answering if he had social or academic supports describes where he received some help.

I was too involved in sports and school. I wasn't heavy into the girls or anything like that so I was going to school, going to practice, going home, that was it. I was in the precollege program so everybody that I was taking classes with were on track to go to college, maybe all of them didn't go but the vast majority of them did.
He was asked how he got onto the pre-college track.

Well, it was in the precollege high school within the high school; they had different tracks, you could be pre-college, general education, [or] business education. I took the pre-college track which has more advanced courses in chemistry, physics, courses like that, whereas the other tracks did not take those types of courses. I think some of the kids I went to middle school with and then we went to high school together and I think it was just probably because of the friends that I've made in middle school and a lot of them were going that track. I think it was just probably more to hang out with the same friends I had met in middle school.

Jim spoke of one particular teacher who provided some academic support.

I’d say in high school I had a teacher, Civics teacher, Mr. Spinks, and I think it was his encouragement because no one from my family had ever gone to college so it was his encouragement that told me I could go to college and I owe it to him.

Before entering the field of education Jim had a 26 year career in the United States Air Force.

Prior to joining the military I was a security guard for close to a year, then I joined the Air Force. Because I had gone to college I was a commissioned officer so I came in as an officer. I had two major jobs in the Air Force one was a missile operations officer and the other one was as a hospital administrator.

How was Jim motivated and influenced to become a classroom teacher?

One, my wife’s a teacher so… And we’ve been married 30 years, so some of that rubs off on you, you talk every day and so I know quite a bit of what goes on in the education community. And then, so I think it was a combination of her being in education and this allows us line up, we have the same days off, summers off together, it makes life a little easier and then it goes back to my teacher in high school, Mr. Spinks. He motivated me to go to college and I feel that this is a way for me to pay him back. That I can go back and maybe help some kid do what he did for me… So that's it.

Jim’s ROTC is a type of alternative route to licensure.

What we had to do was go through training through the Air Force. We go through two weeks of training at Maxwell in Alabama and then based on that the state of Nevada licenses us as an instructor. But you still have to have a
college degree and then from that I didn't have to take all of the required teaching courses. I just had to go through the Air Force program because there's a contract between the Air Force and the District that says these people complete our work, they are retired military, they have college degrees than you'll accept them to teach in the ROTC program. Then every five years I go through a recertification, I go back to Montgomery, Alabama for recertification every five years which have already done once because I've been teaching… This is my eighth year.

Jim’s perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American influence his professional interactions in the classroom.

I think in the back of your mind you never lose track of who you are and where you came from and the fact that you are black male and so when you come to teaching or whatever you're doing you bring all of your life experiences with you and that includes a lot of things; having grown up in a segregated area, having grown up with discrimination and things of that nature and so all of that is a part of who you are and I think I would say that helps you see things in a different light. I think I have more empathy for people of other races…because my student population is probably 40% to 45% minority not primarily African-American but other minorities and so I think it helps me deal with my student population better and then I think sometimes it's our presence, it's not even… I've been here for, this is my eighth year and I think it's…of the African-American students that we do have on campus being able to see that there are some of us out there who are in this profession and who been successful as well, so just being here I think adds something to the mix. I try to tell them to keep an open mind. Some kids…they're very impressionable and a lot of them carry what they bring from home, so they're bringing baggage from home, they bring it here. I don't tolerate the ethnic jokes, the gender jokes or things like that because if you're doing it about somebody else today you doing about me tomorrow so I don't tolerate that kind of stuff. And if I hear things or I get feedback or hear things directly myself that just doesn't sit right with me especially when it comes to racial overtones and things like that am I more sensitive about it, absolutely. I'm in a position where I don't have to tolerate that, you have to play my game so I'll treat you fairly, however if you're responding to other students in a way that I feel is inappropriate I'm going let you know and then give you an opportunity to change your behavior.

Jim’s life experiences also have a profound influence on his characterization of African American men as teachers and how to address the issue of recruiting more black men into the field.
I would think that there is a...cause I know other instructors African-American who do the same thing that I do and I think we all have a desire to want to give something back. Most of us have been successful in whatever career fields and those of us who came out of the military were all successful and obviously I think we all had an education, that was important to us and we see it as an opportunity to give something back. I think that is something we have in common. And then I think we're just generally motivated or driven people and I think we're hoping that maybe some of the things that we picked up along the way we can pass on to someone else. I think I have probably talked to some military guys who are still and say hey if you're thinking about retiring this is something you should consider; get your summers off [laughter].

Why do you think there are few black men as teachers?

One, I think its pay. I think that's important I mean if you're the head of the household and you've got a family and kids and things like that and you're looking to quote, unquote advance in the middle-class then sometimes...and you have a college education that gives you little bit more flexibility, you're going to be driven toward the career fields that are going to pay you more money, business that type of thing. I think that's a driving force and then it historically has had a reputation of being a female dominated career field, there's no question about that. I think you find more male teachers of all races at the high school level. I've substituted at the middle school level before I started this job and I would say 90 to 95% of the teachers were female and I think in elementary schools the same thing applies. I think there has to be some type of incentive structure put in place to draw not just more African-Americans but more men into teaching and my opinion it needs to be done at the college level i.e. scholarships. I'll pay for you to do four years of...get a bachelors in education. The payback is that you give us five years of teaching, after that if you choose to change career fields you owe us nothing and that person leaves college with no debt. I think that's a great deal. I think especially with a lot of I would say minority men who financially need that to go to college. I think that some of the ones who would not normally into education would take it because they see it as their ticket to number one get to college, to pay for college and then yes, you’ve gotta payback, but when you're doing the payback i.e. teaching for five years you're still getting paid so it's not as if your destitute and you don't have $60,000 worked school loans to pay off and that's...as I read that's what you're going to average to be in debt when you graduate, that's just from a Bachelor’s degree. So if you want to get more of us in, I'd say you go down to the undergraduate level and start recruiting in high school. Say I'll give you a 4-year scholarship, you can choose any of the universities that have an educational program and say if it's done at the state level then the agreement is that when you finish you have to come teach in the state of Nevada for five years. I think that's fair... and it's more than fair and they start off life and they're not in debt, so then they can rise, I think they would get to the middle-class faster because
now all they have to do is okay generally your single at that time you get an apartment you get a car and you still don't have to worry about student loans whereas today that's a big portion of everybody's income is going toward student loans which you cannot write off in bankruptcy. A G.I. Bill for education geared toward males and minority men in particular and you go to those schools and you have to target the historically black institutions because that's where most of us go to school.

Jim Booker only intends to teach another two years before retiring. He is in his 8th year teaching and is going to end on his 10th. He will have worked professionally for 36 years. The only thing that would end his career earlier is:

If it gets to the point where it becomes a job; to where you don't want to get up and go to work in the morning. I want to enjoy what I'm doing. I tell the kids… myself, and I have a coworker, there's two of us that work together and...we teach because we want to not because we have to because I have a retirement check saw not going to starve so I don't need this to pay the bills I'm doing it because I want to and I'm hoping to have influence on some of you. Or if it's an age factor I'm 58 years old so if it was medically something that...last year I just had both of my knees replaced... If there were something medically or medicated or something like that than I would take myself out sooner. But right now as long as I'm physically able to take two years and that gives me an even 10 and then let somebody else do it.

If he had the opportunity, Jim has some wisdom to impart on a newly recruited African American male teacher.

There is a movie my wife keeps telling about, it was called *Sisters*. It was about…it's a black movie… It's about a father he had a menial job or something but he wanted all of his daughters to get an education and then there was one of them, I don't think it was a daughter; it was a cousin living with them or a niece. She wasn't as smart as the others and he told her to find a rabbit. The rabbit is finding the smartest kid in your class and latch onto them. So, as an instructor I'd say find a rabbit, find… And you can pick them out when you're sitting in staff meetings…who are the teachers who are good at their skill or trade and learn as much as you can from them that's what I would do. Do as much reading and research on your own too, to learn not just about teaching learn what it takes to be successful in any career field. Because some of the skills that I learned in the military are directly transferable to education and it's not rocket science but, know your trade. Don't strive to be average, strive to be the best you can be and then always be willing to learn more. Because everybody doesn't learn from reading a book but sometimes kids can...video games and other things they can pick up the information; audio, video, digital, whereas in
the old days it was just reading and writing. But at the same time I think that they should be more technically prepared, they should still know the basics; you still need to know how to read and write.

Jim Booker wanted to escape the environment where he was raised in Maryland. Two of his brothers went into the Army and traveled the world. Because of their stories, Jim knew there was more in the world he wanted to see. Jim’s degree in Biology would open many doors giving him the opportunity to see the world and give back to the students he teaches. I referred back to his former teacher and asked Jim if he is now filling the shoes of Mr. Spinks. “If I am, then that's the best thing that I could've done for him to pay him back for what he did for me, ‘cause otherwise my life may have gone a different way.”

**Rudy Stanley**

Rudy Stanley teaches English at a CCSD High School on the east side of Las Vegas. He is 49 years old from Gary, Indiana with his Bachelor’s degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He has been a teacher for 16 years. Growing up in Gary, Rudy was the only child raised a single mom. His father lived in the same city but Rudy stated that his dad was not a “real player in my life; he wasn’t a real factor”.

Rudy’s early recollections were of he and his mom living in the basement of his Aunt’s house and in the projects. His mom worked at a stocking factory before going to barber’s school. His mom didn’t like working with women, thus the selection of barber’s school instead of beauty school. Being poor and living in the projects were still vivid in his mind as he detailed for me of being robbed 8 times and retelling a story where, as he slept, his mom had a gun put in her face as thieves stole everything they had. “She tried to live a middle-class lifestyle while we lived in the projects; she had certain goals and aspirations.”
Rudy describes a mother who worked hard and persevered through school and hardships to achieve her goals. She earned a grant through Manpower and received some money from his great-grandfather to open a barbershop. This is why he described the family’s income during his childhood as “evolving”. The barbershop brought Rudy’s family into the middle class and eventually took his mom to upper-middle class. Rudy was never “privy” to how much money his mom earned but, he explained that “he never went hungry and never went without”.

Discussing his education, Rudy describes an equally developing evolution as a student with many interests that had nothing to do with education. When asked about his experience in high school through the attainment of his Bachelor’s degree, Rudy said it was:

Horrible, it was horrible, I was a horrible student; I was in trouble all the time. I didn't do well academically I think I graduated like 280 out of 340 or something like that. I didn't miss any grades but I just didn't participate in school. I wasn’t interested. I had outside interests that didn't involve academics; just running with my boys, doing things that young men did, rebelling against my middle-class lifestyle.

Rudy left home after high school to join the Air Force for 4 years. He explained that he didn’t have a stellar military career as he felt he brought a great deal of “baggage” from high school. Even though he used the Air Force to leave the social and economic situation in Gary, he was still rebelling, still “fighting the system” but considered the change “the best thing he ever did”. After leaving the Air Force Rudy:

Started at the community college here [Community College of Southern Nevada], I took one class. I was a poet; I wanted to improve my writing. I took one class then I took another class, so it actually took about seven years for me to finish my degree but I went to community college from there to UNLV and I even went back to obtain my Master’s degree from UNLV.
Rudy’s Bachelor’s degree is actually a 5 year degree; a comprehensive English Language Arts degree. He earned his Master’s in a year and a half because he had “figured out the game”. Rudy originally went to school to become a writer but he first had to become a better student, a better person with goals and a plan for achieving them. Once he departed the Air Force, while in Las Vegas, he took a job as a cook at a casino while taking classes at the community college. He paid for classes on his own. He didn’t have any familial support and only some social supports.

I worked at the casinos. I remember the guys telling me, ‘you going to all this school, you gonna be right here with us.’ Crabs in a barrel, I didn’t feel like I had a support. I got a lot of support through the University. I was a veteran. I got some tutoring, no financial aid, but I got tutoring and social support and mentor when I went to school. When I started back to school, originally I went back to school to be a writer and performer. I took a sociology class probably about a third year tinkering around, one class at a time and I met a guy named Ray ------. He was a professor at the community college. He had this thing called Winners Club, basically there are only about six of us in the club. He taught us how to set goals and you know just like a lot of talking to about our futures… That man was a huge impact in my life. He was a former jazz musician he was a drummer, he was a white cat to man. Ray was really cool man he just reached out to me not in an enabling, touchy-feely, way. It was like really a lot of tough love, he called me on my bull---- and you know he laid out there about the facts of life. He changed my life so much that I wanted to do that.

Rudy was heavily motivated by Ray’s influence and support to earn his Bachelor’s degree but it was practicality that eventually led Rudy to take the steps that would lead him to the classroom. His original aspirations were toward performing as a poet but his direction changed while at the community college and he would decide on teaching once at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

I was going to social studies, my major was anthropology. But I started looking at what was I going to do with that degree and I did have a passion for writing and literature came easy to me, it just began to be a natural fit. Once I transferred from the community college over to UNLV I just took the English route.
Becoming an English teacher was a circuitous route to the classroom yet it infused Rudy’s passion with allowing him to reciprocate the motivation and support he had received years earlier.

My bottom line is to make a difference. That's my bottom line, to make a difference; to get these kids to recognize their untapped potential…to get them on a course of achievement and success. That's my bottom line. And [in] a lot of ways this is my ministry and I'm not a religious man; but this is my ministry. I feel in a lot of ways, I was called this. I give my passion. Sometimes I teach to my drawers are wet; I give it what I've got. I may not be the best but they know I care.

Rudy’s life experiences have a profound influence on his characterization of African American men as teachers and how to address the issue of recruiting more black men into the field.

It's very few; it's very few [black male teachers]. I think most brothers who get a degree and they’re in a position to make money, that's what they do. This is service oriented profession and there are a few here but not a lot. Those that are here tend to be dedicated, we tend to have a social agenda, we’re not here to rescue kids; we're here to uplift kids. I'm in the life-changing business. Because I can just relate to kids, a lot of them, especially with the socioeconomic levels that I work with here; the demographics that we have here are typically lower income, a lot of single parent households and I just deal with it from that perspective. I can see them come in and I know when they're high as soon as they hit the door. I know what’s going on with them, I can relate because that was the life that I lived. You know I don't try to be a surrogate father but really just the mentor and really my relationship with my students are at a distance, I really don't, I'm not the teacher they come and hang in my room all the time. Because they know when I'm around I want them to be focused on their academics and straightening out their life; whether it's to go to college or to get a job. You know, you need to have some focus in your life. You need to make a difference for your parents that are working so hard for you and everything else, so I just take a holistic approach. My subject area is English but I teach students… Life.
Why do you think there are few black men as teachers?

If you get a degree you're going to get a degree in area where you can get some economic remuneration; education just doesn't happen to be it. I think in elementary schools there are more African American men working than there are in high schools but the numbers I see are very, very low. This year because this is a Title I school, I think they're looking to bring in more diversity. [To get more black men in education] I think the connection needs to be made in their own lives, like I said; it's a service deal you know just take a look at the community and figure out what they can do to serve that community from which they come. Bring them into the schools let them see what's really going on. A lot of our experience in schools is negative because the structure is still very racist. We need to understand that we can become empowered in this environment and make real change.

Rudy has been a teacher for 16 years and doesn’t foresee leaving the profession any reason besides winning the lottery. He plans on teaching for at least another 14 years and will stick with it “As long as I feel I make a difference while I'm here”. For the newly recruited black male teacher Rudy suggests:

Keep asking yourself why you're doing this; keep asking yourself why you're doing this. As long as those answers are outside of yourself you've chosen the right profession. If you've come looking for glory or gold star on a lot of money, any of those things [you chose the wrong field]. And learn as much as you can; the more you know, the more you can give to the kids. It doesn't matter what color they are, what gender they are; we need good teachers dedicated to these kids that are willing to give of themselves and come here and make a difference in their lives without being on a mission. I see the missionaries coming in and saying “were saving the kids”. If you feel you’re from these kids then you know you can't save them. You can maybe guide and mentor and suggests but their lives there is no cultural deficit. You need to just be with this thing, this teaching thing. You’ve got to be with this.

Kevin Walker

Kevin Walker teaches Special Education Emotionally Challenged students at a CCSD High School in the city of North Las Vegas. Kevin is 46 years old from Macon, Georgia with a Bachelor’s degree for the University of Montana. He has been a teacher for the last 5 years.
Kevin was an Air Force “brat”, meaning he is the child of a parent in the United States Air Force, along with two younger sisters. His father was an Air Force Officer who served 26 years in the military. Like many children of military parents Kevin didn't spend much time in the city he was born in, Macon Georgia, other than during the holidays, due to moving frequently. The state where he “grew up” in was Montana. He describes his family as middle-class.

My high school experience was at Montana. I went to school in a middle-class school, played sports; wasn't really good at anything in particular, just played all of them. In high school I played football and ran track, general course of study so it wasn't anything out of the ordinary. I just took the course requirements that I had to take; finished those, finished with a high school diploma, went to college. I knew that I was going to follow my father's path into the military so as soon as I graduated I went on to the University of Montana and went into ROTC. My primary focus in college was to finish ROTC, so I finished with a Political Science degree, think I had a 3.8 GPA when I finished and went on a tour of duty after that.

Kevin matter-of-factly described his path through school as though it was pre-determined. He graduated from high school then went directly into the University of Montana, where he earned his Bachelor’s in 4 and 1/2 years. Answering the question of what type of student he was, success in school also seemed pre-determined.

I think I was a focused student. I just liked getting stuff done, so as far as structure, I was a well-rounded student. Had to study though, I wasn't one of those students that could just come in and sit back and it automatically came to you, so I had to actually work at school.

When you say you had to work at school, do you already have those skills?

I think the study skills were definitely developed in those high school years, those were the influential years and again those people, it affected you, those coaches who were instrumental in making sure that you studied and when I got into college, automatically I was already tied into ROTC and they’d help to make sure that you are on track.
Kevin had a number of supports during his undergraduate years and graduate years.

Undergraduate, as I stated before, I had ROTC but in addition to that, what actually happened was that the officers in the community also take part in ensuring that you have everything for your education; so you automatically become part of the officers Association and when you go to these different luncheons and things, they actually walk up to you and ask you how you are doing. You know, if you got a problem in math you can call me. “I was a pilot”, type thing. In addition to that, I also was involved in a fraternity there; the fraternity brothers are also willing to help guide you to make sure that you’re successful because ultimately every organization that I was involved in was key to being successful so I had those things that were motivating me. While on the actual campus for the undergraduate, I was Student Body Business Manager. I actually had an in depth communication with the professors so I got a chance to sit down with them on a different level than just sitting down with them in the normal class structure, so that helped.

Kevin’s family didn’t provide a lot of family support but he said there was the expectation. Kevin stated that every sibling was expected to go to school for at least a Bachelor’s degree. When asked if he understood that expectation in high school, he responded, “Absolutely! Pretty much, I mean the military was paying for everything so the only time that I really saw my family was the holidays and then they actually… Not a lot of family support.” Upon graduation from University of Montana, Kevin went into the Army as an officer and followed his stint in the military with a stint in the corporate world and banking.

So I spent 10 years as an Army officer, traveled all over; Germany, Oklahoma. I came back to the United States and went to work for a company called Unilever. I worked for them in the bay [San Francisco area]. That was during the .com era, so money was just being thrown out and so I ended up going to work for a finance company which lasted for about 10 years, US Bank. When the economy crashed I transitioned into education. So at that point it was a turning point for me in my life because I actually had a chance to go back and do something that I really wanted to do versus something that I was economically driven to do.
Kevin had spent 10 years in the military, 10 years in the corporate world before spending the last 5 years in education. What motivated and influenced you to become a classroom teacher?

Again, it was an opportunity for me once I changed professions, totally changed professions, it was an opportunity to go with something where I would be giving back and helping children. I mean really, when I entered into special-education I really didn't have an idea as to where I was going to go but the more I learned about it, I decided that the emotionally disturbed kids were more [for] me because it was exciting and definitely different every day and so that became my area of focus.

With his Bachelor’s in Political Science, Kevin took an Alternative Route to Licensure to become credentialed as a licensed teacher. Again, Kevin had supports in place to help him successfully complete the program.

Throughout that program there’s actually a mentoring process. So it's already tied into the program where you’re already paired up with a senior teacher in your field, and my particular field is special-education. So I was paired up with a lady who had been teaching for about 27 years, so she was very thorough and clear and I could call her at four the morning or in the middle of the night, if I needed help with something, so she was always there.

Kevin’s perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American influence his professional interactions in the classroom.

I think it definitely benefits the students because if there's anything that the students may need I'm certainly in a position that I can help, so I think it's all positive aspect that the children definitely benefit from my experiences and my relationships with the kids.

Kevin’s impression of African American males in the field of education is one of beneficial rewards to classrooms and schools, in general.

I think the African-American male that's involved in teaching currently is well-educated. There's very few of us, I think there needs to be more. I think there are several drives that are ongoing to try to bring more black males into the profession but the key characteristics that stand out in my mind are they are driven to help, particularly in the special-education field, the science fields and
the math fields, those brothers are definitely outstanding. I think they're few and far between and not enough out there but they certainly, every one of them regardless of fields are top-notch.

Kevin was asked if he had recruited other African American men to teaching careers.

I think I've done it, not just in teaching but in other aspects military, sports…try to drive young black males into that direction but it's a hard sale because it's a lot of work. I think there's one or two who say, 'hey this is what I want to do’, but we're still in that stage of… I've only been doing it for five years so we're still in that stage to see what’s the end result. The number one problem that I see is academics because they don't have the foundation and that's the number one hurdle and I can say that it's not just with the black males but even the black females. But number one if they don't have the foundation it seems to be that stopping point is with the test. Those entry tests seem to be killing a lot of people in the fact that they just don't have the background or the habits to pass the test. I mean you have a lot of people who want to come and teach but they just don't have the skill set to pass the test.

Kevin had a proactive vision on the issue of strategies for recruiting black men into teaching careers.

Well, I think it starts obviously at the ground floor in the schools. So I think as long as we’re doing a positive, good job at educating them [young black men] from that point we can kind of build on that success.

Kevin plans to continue teaching as he progresses toward completion of his Doctorate, which is at least two more years away. Nonetheless, he doesn’t see himself as a twenty year career teacher. He intends to advance as a specialist or into an administrative position. What advice would he give to a newly recruited black male teacher?

The number one thing that's important is to continue on with your education because I think that within…depending on the academic environment that you’re teaching, the more education that you have, the more successful you will be. I think education is the key because once you have it, you can't take it away. That's the number one thing!
Cameron Chisolm

Cameron Chisolm is a Math teacher at a charter school located on the Historic West Side of Las Vegas; the same school as Anthony Morgan. Cameron is 29 years old from Brooklyn, New York. His Bachelor’s degree was earned from Syracuse University and he has been teaching 4 years.

Cameron’s mother raised him and his sister on her own while earning an income that would place her in a lower socio-economic level. His father spent 10 years in prison from the time that Cameron was 11 years to 21 years old. He described his father as pretty irresponsible, disinterested and inconsistent with child-support obligations. His dad would make occasional calls to talk with Cameron. Cameron’s father lived in Florida with a wife and a son younger than Cameron. Cameron would visit his father during the summer, but his father would often not be there and he would end up spending more time with his step-mom that with his dad. As an adult their relationship is somewhat consistent; they speak about once or twice a month by phone.

Cameron’s educational experience is one of success by way of reacting to the situation he was currently operating within until his sophomore year in high school when he came to the realization that he really was an intelligent student.

I was in the gifted program in New York and I had been in the schools that were primarily black until middle school and I've always been [in] those gifted programs. When I got to high school I went to the Bronx High School of Science it’s one of the specialized high schools in New York. I think when I got there [I] had gone from being one of the smartest kids in school to being out of place; where half the school was Asian everyone there was like super bright and I think at first I [was] really intimidated by and felt this urge to like not [perform]. I was accelerated in French by one year, I was accelerated in English by one year, I was accelerated in math by two years, so it was like, they didn’t
call it that but it would have been like taking Algebra II as a freshman. So I think that alone was very intimidating.

When I saw how nerdy the people were, I really wanted to make sure I could identify myself in them even though [at] my old school I had no problem being the nerd amongst other black students because it was like cool and you still could hang with people outside the classroom. Here it seemed like these people seemed a little bit different, so I had first two years where I was skipping a lot of classes, not doing a lot of things. One big thing socially was that I thought a lot of the black kids there were corny and were really different, I used to hang out with people like that by force sometimes in my gifted classes but I would always have friends outside that were normal. A lot of my friends went to Brooklyn Tech which was also specialized school but a lot lower on the scale of admissions. So I was the only kid from junior high school I went there, I went there by myself one girl from my church went there who I would really wasn't close with. One thing that was really telling was [I] actually failed French in my first year in high school with an F and I had done French in middle school. I struggled in my math classes as well didn't really pay a lot of attention and I was two years accelerated.

I just wasn't really very motivated to do the time for taking notes. I didn’t do the homework assignments; I was just kind out there. What was interesting was that a lot of black students that were at the school struggled academically and felt that way. I really wasn't very motivated at all about what was going on there. Flipped a switch and maybe at the end of my sophomore year because of the really good counselor that I had there; an academic counselor who made me do this attendance sheet to bring all my teachers and put it completely in my court so they could sign off that I’d actually come to class. After I started doing that and realizing that I could do it, it was fine and actually it was that summer that I had summer school as I failed that one class it kind of put me behind, so I had to take other classes to get ahead. [During that summer] My school was under construction, so I had to go to a regular high school that was close by my old high school.

I remember taking this art class and this teacher heard that I went to Bronx science and automatically she put in my in her head that had to be this amazing amazingly bright student. Her believing that of me, I remember her asking me, ‘wow, what are your grades like and I said something crazy like I had a 94 average which was far from the truth, I might've been in the low 80s but I lied about it and I started living a lie where I started doing these amazing projects putting a lot of time into it so that she would believe that I was this person. I'm not really sure what it was, I think I always knew I had potential. I started kind of faking the funk long enough that I started to actually be that, so by the time my junior year came around I really was getting high GPAs and kind of breezing through things. From that point on I just felt like I could be the best in most of the classes that I took. I ended up taking two AP classes when I was a
senior; AP physics and AP calculus. I got really involved in different things at the school like musical theater stuff, a lot of dance and things.

Thing is interesting, socially, is that I wasn't actually friends with a lot of these people I just saw what they did and it was like a clear black section of the cafeteria and I would hang out over there and play Spades with them; even occasionally things outside of school with them but I really wasn't friends with them. By the time I got to Syracuse for my undergrad studies I had a lot of confidence and felt really good about my academic abilities and I became a really good writer. When I got to Syracuse I became Student Body President as a sophomore and it was a predominantly white institution, so it was rare to even have a black student body president, period.

Cameron went on to earn both his Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science and his Master’s in Public Administration from Syracuse University. He completed the Bachelor’s degree in 4 years and his Master’s during a one year intensive program. He’s currently studying law at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas while teaching. Cameron has had a number of supports while earning his degrees.

Out the gate there was this program called CSTEP, which is the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program, which was a program at Syracuse. Syracuse had some really innovative retention programs for students of color. This was a program specifically designed for people who are undertaking careers in science, technology, engineering, and math. Yeah, and as part of that, from the gate, we started out with a Summer Start program where we came and earned six credits before everyone arrived on campus. That was cool because even though I had taken AP calculus in high school, I had jumped at Calculus I again. Potentially I felt a lot more prepared and a lot more in depth that starting out my college career with seven credits worth about 4.0. I was part of NSBE, National Society of Black Engineers. That was a really cool networking opportunity and to see so many black professionals. I could say that probably was the start of me becoming a leader because there was so much leadership training with NSBE. [There was also the] Alpha Phi Alpha book club. You didn't have to be an Alpha to be a part of it. And I associated with them because they had great events. They would bring like Chuck D or I remember they had a listening party when the Dead Prez album came out. There was like a really kind of conscious vibe. The Black Artist League was another organization I got involved in. I was really into their whole thing with poetry and I played piano so I got involved with the jazz night stuff.
Within the college of engineering there was an Academic Excellence Workshop Program where you got extra help on some of your more challenging courses you'd work in small groups on some things. So academically and socially I think there were a lot of supports there.

Cameron’s sister also attended Syracuse University while he was matriculating there. His mom had her two children away at Syracuse. During this time Cameron described his mom as going through Empty Nest syndrome, yet she was very supportive of both remaining at the University and even provided emotional support for Cameron.

She was helpful and that I remember one day really early on, I never did any computer programming and computer science was a very challenging major. I remember a lot of the kids in my class were super nerdy and had a lot of computer experience. We had a lab and when we got started in the lab, like literally, some people who were done with this lab in like 5 min. and were laughing at how easy it is and I'm sitting there looking at the sheet and looking at my blank screen, like alright I'm going to figure this out. Then like in the next 15 min. maybe another group of people leave, then like 30 min. past and it's clear that I'm the only one still there and I have not even got started a little bit and the T.A. is looking at his watch and he's like ‘okay are you all set?’ And knowing that I haven't even started I was like, ‘yeah I'm good, see you later.’ And I leave, back to my room, call my mom crying, like I can do this, whatever. I think she told me something to the effect of, you know, I have to go to school. Because she did go to college the same year, she went back to college the same year I started high school and she had to juggle all that and she beats it, she passed all four parts of the CPA exam the same time she got very close to straight A's all the way through and she was like you know you're smarter than me you can figure it out. She kind of put it all back on me and I went ahead and I think I ended up getting at A- in that class.

After graduating from Syracuse and completing his Master’s program, Cameron moved to Las Vegas and became a Management Analyst with the Clark County Department of Family Services.

I worked in the quality assurance, quality improvement unit, did a lot of reports, policy initiatives, a lot of trainings, identifying areas of like waste and stuff, and making recommendations to improve things.

Cameron thought he would be able to use his degree to help the government “really change society”. He was in that position for three years while simultaneously
becoming increasingly disenchanted with the agency because he saw bureaucracy perpetuating a system of incompetence and lack of urgency in responding to children’s needs. His experiences with the Department of Family Services (DFS) provided the motivation to enter law school. For a year he worked for DFS while taking coursework toward his Juris Doctorate.

So I decided to go into teaching so I can have more opportunity to work in the summertime and just to have a little bit more flexibility and actually like my job instead of sit there 9 to 5 and do God knows what. In 2004, a writing professor asked if I ever considered the program Teach for America. I was looking at her sideways, like are you crazy. I never…At that point I was like you must be out of your mind. I'm never going to be in the classroom but I think that planted the seed in my head. In 2004 I went to this program and I heard this lady, Rachel Gadsick, who was this old-school TFA alum like ‘91 and she was talking about like the injustices in the classroom and I was sitting there and I felt like fired up. I remember getting on the bus and Syracuse one time and seeing like all these kids cutting class during the day and they were cursing and acting crazy and I thought to myself like man this is a serious issue. And when I got home that winter break, I saw the same kids on my block doing the same stuff they always do which was nothing and I thought man this is very serious. My mom didn't want me to do it, other people I spoke to didn’t want me to do it. But I felt like it was super important and I looked at it like more of a duty.

Teach for America was able to recruit Cameron to teach instead of taking the opportunity he had for a full scholarship to complete another Master’s program. He taught with the Clark County School District and with the Charter school where he currently teaches. His perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American man influenced his interactions in the classroom.

One of the privileges I had being not just a black person, I think this is really important to get because a lot of the black man in Teach for America, for example, were like Carlton Banks. Very privileged, [they] had no way to relate to the kids besides their skin color. In fact, it was worse, worse for them than it would be for [a] white person; far worse, I would think. But for me, you know having like knowing what it's like to grow up struggling financially, to feel the pressure to still have nice clothes and have other things going on. You have
family drama and to have family members in prison and understand what it's like to be around gangs, to have that be such a part of your existence.

I remember speaking at a Teach for America event for the newest teachers that came in this past year and telling them that you know, just that morning I was looking at my closet [and] I thought to myself, isn’t this crazy I don’t own any red and I’m a grown man. Why don’t I own any red? Because I lived in a Crip neighborhood and I would never wear red. It just seems to me like you've got to… see this is part of people's lives and I felt like if nothing else I got [understand] the kids, I got the parents and I could speak a level of reality with them. I remember that we had a kid who was essentially failing dance because he couldn’t buy jazz slippers because the mother thought they were a little gay. I had to kind of tear her a new one to let her know how ridiculous that is. Like this whole idea of homophobia in the black community; as if putting on a pair of ballet slippers [is going to] to turn someone into a homosexual is just bizarre and you know again, I felt that is a relationship that I had. I can say this to them…I can have this conversation. There's this trust and there's this kind of…it's just [a] different context that I'm able to build with them.

White teachers couldn’t say the stuff that I said. Like, ‘yeah, you know what? It sucks that that happened to you, but I don’t care. There's no excuse note that's going to get you out of this assignment. I don't care, because the world’s not going to care about you and I always kind of looked at it like, as this big picture of like, we have to defeat the statistics. And I’d see people's work and I’d say, ‘this is trash’. I don't care if this is good for you, this is trash, objectively. Some people might get impressed by people's improvement and all that, and I'm thinking to myself I don't buy it, this is garbage, this is trash and even my students started to use that language after a while because they understand what's going on and they just see who I am and what I do and my sense of urgency was always at 100 [%]. Because I…I just look at what's out there for them and it's just so much bad and only a little bit of good and to get to that good, you have to be exceptional, exceptional.

Cameron is no longer with Teach for America and doesn’t plan on teaching much longer. He is finishing his law degree and already has a part-time position with a local law firm. His thoughts on why it’s so difficult to get black men to enter education are as frank as the discussions he would have with his students and parents.

African-American men in the teaching field, from what I've always seen are driven by some deeper desire and deeper obligation and duty to serve, and that’s something I've seen that's pretty consistent and I wouldn’t limit that African-American men. I would say primarily speaking most teachers that I know teach because they feel like they have a desire and a duty to be, to teach but more it's like they just can't see themselves not doing it. Because when you look at all the
other motivating factors you could have for a job yet maybe their work-life balance is better than some other positions, but it's a grind, it's definitely a grind. People are definitely not doing it for the money because [the] money is not anything that could be a motivator. But black men in particular, black men I’ve always known or even associated with [in] education, maybe not even in the classroom or even working at a school usually choose to work at a school because of some special desire. A lot of them could be doing some better things, in terms of better income more prestigious types of work, but the decision to even work in a school is usually motivated by a deeper desire to make change.

From Cameron’s standpoint, societal and personal perceptions of what it means to be a teacher and personal history may also be a detractor for prospective teachers.

I think teaching is just not a very appealing profession for the type of person that can qualify to be a teacher right. You think, if you can qualify to be a teacher that means you have high educational credentials and given the lack of black males, in particular, in a lot of other fields. Those other fields probably will pay a premium to have you and it's just not really worth it to go through it [to become a teacher].

I think that black males don't necessarily have the best experiences in education themselves. Even I can point back, I was so bad in this one class [in elementary school] cause I made fun of people, I like, I would just kind of be all disrespectful to the teacher she would give the extra work as punishment and it got to the point where the paraprofessional told my mom to get me tested for Gifted and Talented before he gets tested for Special Ed; because I was clearly headed down that path, given my level of, just general disobedience. So, you know, I think a lot of black males can point to experiences like that with they just don't really even care that much for teachers. I don't know. Then, a tough thing for me was, even being a teacher my first year, in particular, it was like, ownership of that role as that sort of authority. It's kind of like being the cops, like being 5-0, like now you're the one that's calling people's parents, and whatever. And on multiple occasions, I find it funny now that I used to think that, and now I'll get really annoyed with kids that they would call me a snitch. But it was part of that feeling like, how am I supposed to be laying out discipline when my life is in disarray and I’m the furthest thing from being a disciplined person.

I've encouraged people to do Teach for America. Generally folks that have had the interests, I've been able to talk to them. I'll be honest with you; the requirements are so difficult that I wouldn’t even try. I wouldn't even try to get somebody to go through all that process. Like you've got a pay all this money to get nothing back in return. It doesn't make any sense and then on top of it, even if they did have it, like I can't really recommend teaching as a profession for people. Unless you really feel like some duty that you have to do it I wouldn’t
recommend it, I wouldn't even want it for my kids. It's terrible, like it's objectively terrible. If you have to step back and look at what you have to go through as a teacher like, why would anybody choose to do it. It's like you're choosing to be oppressed, you're going out of your way... It's a tough gig. You have some great stories, you have some isolated moments but as a whole it's just such a grind.

To say, like you have a duty to do this, so come do it. It's not legitimate, you're not going to motivate people that can qualify to do that kind of job to do that because why would I volunteer to get treated like garbage as a professional for one, as a student secondly, and then like work in an industry where no one really like respects what you do. It's a tough, tough gig.

With the stark reasons that Cameron stated as detractions to teaching, he had some suggestions on how to possibly recruit more black men into the teaching field. Here, Cameron shares a tip that was provided by a potential Teach for America recruit.

The key, I think is actually going off of the duty, recruiting people based off of this duty thing. Because when you do that you acknowledge that it sucks and people aren’t getting into it with a blind eye. You knowing that this isn't the profession where it's going to be like some great thing where you, whatever... It's a grind. I think you could sell that to a lot of people. In fact, I remember Larry, the guy’s name is Larry Tate, he actually stopped me in the middle of my little TFA pitch, and he's like, you know, I think you need to stop talking about these loan payback things from AmeriCorps and these stipends for grad school and whatever, like that's really irrelevant because black people can get that so many different other ways that it doesn't matter. You've got to focus on the core duties of why we should do this.

Talk about the inequality, talk about education and equity as the civil rights movement of our day, talk about these different issues that you can be a part of. For me I approached it with a very much, very much like a boot camp mentality, like this it, I'm out here, I’m going all in. I would do whatever I can to make this work.

I have a kid here, [he’s] one of my fraternity brother’s son. He's definitely more Carlton Banks than me but I think there is still an impact that a young black kid that wants to teach [can have]; there is something that he could learn from being in a [diverse school] environment, I think [he is teaching] in Phoenix. He's doing it in Phoenix. He went to Morehouse, [now] he's going to this school in Phoenix and he’s doing TFA there. Interesting I mean because his population is like 70% Hispanic there but, in any case, I think he's going to walk away with a really good understanding of the privileges that he's had and be able to maybe move forward with that.
What advice would Cameron give to a newly recruited black male teacher?

I would say don't be afraid to call it like it is. We are there so we don't have to be politically correct, we can have these conversations about the use of the N word...we can have conversations about how like, you really can't act like that [ignorant] in public because people will really think you're crazy. I remember sitting down with three girls who went to detention in the Dean's office after school and I showed them the tape of that one guy that was talking about the intruders in his bedroom that crazy guy it was like some YouTube thing. The guy was a hot mess. And I put them on, and at first they were kind of mad but they couldn't help but laugh after a while because [they saw] how crazy that guy looks. They had like over 30 million viewers on YouTube, I'm like they like to laugh at us and see us look crazy. Like Basketball Wives, they love to, they pay big money to see us act like buffoons. Let's not give them the benefit of the doubt.

As a teacher, like I could talk to guys and be like, look you need to stop the foolishness. I remember I had a set of, I taught us a set of seniors this past year who had failed the Proficiencies multiple times. A lot of them were athletes; I let them know like look you're going to go to college. I'm going to tell you straight up you've got to be careful with these white women, you've got to be careful because your career or the potential you're going to have for a career, can be shot in one moment, so you need to be extremely cautious. You know sometimes I hear myself saying this stuff and I'm like so what, they need to hear it, they need to hear what I'm saying.

I challenge a lot of my girls you know I'm like you know what you need to make sure in your life you don't associate with losers because we have so many black women that are supporting these pathetic men and it doesn't make any sense you can do better or you can do that by itself, but you're not going to do bad with somebody. I think I have even more credibility.

While fulfilling his duties as a teacher, Cameron truly dismissed with political correctness, maintained his integrity and spoke with a minister’s passion as a truth-teller to his students, their parents and the school community.
Jerry Williams

Jerry Williams teaches Art and English at a charter school in Henderson, Nevada. He is 45 years old from the Bronx, New York. He earned his Bachelor’s degree from Fordham University and has taught for 10 years. Jerry’s story is that of a young man who faced numerous challenges before entering the teaching field but he continues to confront challenges while pursuing his professional goals.

Jerry grew up in a household as the middle child of three sons to married parents. His father didn’t graduate from high school while his mother did complete high school. Jerry described the household of his youth as “slightly better than poor”. His parents divorced when he was 13. His dad left the household and often withheld money “as punishment to his ex-wife”, “…so we went from being relatively poor to really, really dirt poor.”

In the 70’s and 80’s, there were many times when we would go to the fridge and open up the door and there’s nothing in there and come back a little later when hungry and you know there’s still nothing in there. That was pretty much our existence from the time I was 13 until the time I left 16.

Jerry was caught in the middle of his parents’ marital problems. Due to limited income, his parents ended their marriage of 25 years but they didn’t divorce in the traditional sense that one parent left the household. His parents remained under the same roof until infidelity became such an issue that the living arrangement could no longer be tolerated. Jerry’s father expected his ex-wife to remain celibate and enlisted (required) Jerry to spy on his mom whenever she was on the phone. Confronted by his mom, Jerry accused his mom of cheating on his dad. His mom endured the challenge of Jerry’s disdain until she couldn’t anymore and leveled that dreaded phrase “this is my house
these are my rules and if you don't like it you can leave”. At 16 years old, Jerry moved into a rooming house. He was already working at McDonald’s and going to high school.

Jerry, like Cameron Chisolm, also went to the Bronx High School of Science, just about 16 years apart. At 6’4”, Jerry was a child struggling to make a way in a man’s body. He attended school regularly while working his fast-food job full-time.

When you were [a] senior, [you want to] get [your] wheels and be independent, but I’m like I’m already independent, I’m living in a room and the room was like a half a mile from school because I’ve got a be able to walk to school because I have no wheels. I couldn't go to the prom. I immediately had to stop playing basketball and extracurricular activities; those went by the wayside because immediately after school I went to work.

Part of the reason why don't have a hard time with things taking longer than they’re supposed to and not getting a lot of sleep is because at that time I would not sleep. I would stay up and do my homework at like 1 o'clock in the morning because of getting home from my job at midnight or something like that.

Jerry was driven to maintain his life as regularly as possible during his high school years. He demonstrated academic discipline when there wasn’t anyone forcing the expectation that he perform well in school. The following paragraphs describe Jerry’s elongated path from high school to the completion of his Bachelors, a 16 year journey.

The Bronx high school of science which was a public school but it was a prestigious public school in New York and that you have to take a test in order to get in as it is academically-based. Of the 300 or so [students] who took it, [the placement test] only 10 got into Bronx Science.

Of course it was like the worst last couple months of my life as it was uncovered that I was actually smart because I'd been hiding that for a really long time but once I got in I couldn't hide it any. So after that I was a brainiac or whatever but I was in a school where it was okay to be a brainiac because I'm surrounded.

Bronx science was a great experience but it was not a microcosm of life felt like it fully because there were lots of Asian people there were white people there were black people.
I'd never study studied before in my life until high school because the public school education, not necessarily the lesser, but I think the teachers didn't expect so much of their students so the test was so easy that basically I was able to pass without studying. The educational aspects were great because it taught me that there is a procedure to succeeding.

I was exposed to things like I'd never heard of, like calculus, you know European history. So it was a good preparation as far as what I was going to do in life as far as making education my main career but as far as presenting me to the rest of the world it was a horrible experience because then I got out into the rest of the world where it was 90% Caucasian and I felt like I didn't know how to interact with them, so my first few job experiences while I was working my way through college before I became a teacher were not the best ones because I did not know how to act according to the way the dominant culture wanted me to act.

I couldn't get my degree until I was 31 because I left home at 16; I was working to survive, so I would have to save up for two years to go for semester, save up for a year to go for another semester.

Jerry portrayed himself as an intelligent person up for hire to whoever was paying the most for his services, even though in reality, he was working entry level jobs during high school and while he was working on his Bachelor’s.

I took a lot of jobs, one day I was a janitor, I was an office manager, I was a mail boy. I worked in many major fast food places; I worked at McDonald's, Burger King, White Castle and I worked at Bojangles. I just saw my job as a means to an end. I didn't have the concept of doing something for somebody else or doing something on a higher level to give something back to society. Somewhere along the line I realized that this is something I'm going to do for 8, 12, 16 hrs. a day; it should have more meaning, so by the time I got into my 20s I was still in my junior year in school and that's when it solidified for me to I was going to be the black teacher who I didn't see until I was in college.

I got into Harvard I got into Columbia I got into Stanford but I couldn't afford to go to those schools Fordham was my fourth choice school it was in my state it was in New York City I knew I would not have to be out-of-state tuition. “It took me 16 years to get my college degree. You know, it took me forever to get that degree; one, it taught me perseverance and patience to get that degree and two, it solidified who I was going to become. I didn't have to go that far so I went to Fordham for my first bachelor's degree and now I am about to finish my second Master’s degree in art my first degree was in English literature at Fordham and now I'm going to UNLV finishing in our because I've been teaching art for 10 years and I thought it would be nice to have a degree in the subject I was teaching.
What familial, social and academic supports did you have while completing your educational attainments; undergraduate and if applicable, graduate school?

My nuclear family was of no support because my father didn't graduate from high school. He thought that it was acting white to actually pursue education my mother always thought that if I pursued education that I would get too intelligent to know how to deal in the white world. I started meeting more intelligent women and they would support me but as the relationships waned and passed away that support would go. When I met my wife in 1995 she was the person who bolstered me to continue the one who said that she would continue to support me no matter how long it took.

My son is really supportive because it helps him realize that learning is a lifelong endeavor. So when he sees that daddy has to do homework and now he's getting ready to start kindergarten and it's a big thing for him because now he won't balk because daddy is doing the same thing.

I have a mentor who was my sixth grade math teacher Ms. Rubinstein, little Jewish lady about 4 foot 8, but she stuck out for me she was my math teacher six through eighth grade and my homeroom teacher six and eight grade. She didn't take any mess from me [she] was one of the few teachers that I saw in public school that took her position, the powerful role that she had, the person who could move my mind, seriously. She's the reason I got certified in math. She said that teachers will never be unemployed. You'll always have a job. She kept contact with me. I wrote her a five page letter the day I graduated from college, back in front, telling about all the influence that you've [she’d] given to me, that she was a parent that I needed when I didn’t have it, that support. Aside from her, I had a couple of other really keep teachers who helped me.

Socially, I didn't get that much support because again there is the stigma that, [many] African-Americans still have it in 2012, that there is something negative about getting an education…I even worked hard not to have a New York accent because I always thought a New York accident sounded ignorant, [it] just doesn't sound sure. I worked really hard on my diction and pronunciation.

Jerry is currently in an ARL program while earning his Master’s in English to qualifying for his licensure to teach English. He has aspirations to also obtain a Master’s in Art education so he can teach college level Art education. Jerry’s previous comments have expressed the people who have helped him throughout his academic and life
journey. His perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American have influenced his professional interactions in the classroom?

I've had interesting experiences with non-African-American teachers and principals. In the classroom is like once we get out of the way things will be fine like in the beginning people have a hard time acknowledging that I'm black it's almost like it's a bad word to say that I'm a black person the first time we were talking about just the physical characteristics of two different people begin to avoid color altogether what about what color he is and they would say black in a hushed tone or negative.

Again, Jerry stands at 6’4” and about 300 pounds. For those who have had little exposure to various cultures, especially African American, Jerry acknowledges that his presence could be a little intimidating. He explains that the cultural exchange is part of what he cherishes in the field of education.

Being an African American art teacher always make sure that they learn a lot of black history because of course February is Black History Month and gave kind of pay attention but don't really pay attention and they talk about the same three or four people when I tell them the first open heart surgery was done by an African-American, like this is information you get an October hearing in June and again April because you can't separate African-American history for history. So I use my curriculum with a lot of things like that to the kids can understand that this is something they should be learning year-round.

Similar to why Jerry uses his classroom to expose students to diverse experiences, Jerry believes other African American male teachers have to counter the stereotypes perpetuated by society and by those within the African American culture also. He characterizes black men who teach as sorts of cultural ambassadors and men willing to buck long lasting impractical expectations from within the black culture.

African American men are forced, they are pigeonholed into an idea of what they're supposed to be based on media and television and then our fathers tell us that we are supposed to be a strong people; my dad told me I was not supposed to cry. I never saw any other black men like me, so all the other black men that I have seen had been strong, stoic, never be sick, never admit failure and never admit defeat; over the top, the only emotion they could ever express was anger.
because you can’t say that you are hurt because that's too much of the feminine emotion.

African-American men in the teaching field go closer to what it always was that I tried to suppress; they are nurturing, they know how to express themselves to kids, to adults, they know how to be around people. African-American men or at least the ones that I've had the experience to know they are lone wolves they don’t like to do things with other people. African-American male teachers have to know how to get along with other people, their gregarious, you have to be able to get along with other people and you're good at doing stuff like that, they’re just more in touch with their feminine side, in my opinion, they’re more in touch with their feminine side.

Jerry is planning to be a teacher “as long as he is still breathing”. The age level of his students may change but he has no plans to do anything else but teach. Nevertheless, there are some circumstances that could make him leave the profession.

The thing that would get me out of teaching are unsupportive administrators. I've had a myriad of principles when I was at [another charter school] I had four principals in two years and that was a really hard because everybody wants put their stamp on the school. Inevitably that means change, it’s not just upheaval for the kids, you know, it's an upheaval for the teachers also. It's a change in procedures and how things go and I've had a lot of principals who didn't like me who had their biases against African-Americans.

My last principal I had a first-grade kid in my class, adorable little girl; she is a highly functioning autistic. There were days where she was less talkative, so me on one particular day in November, I have been teaching this student in my class since August. I went to my principal and said you know little so-and-so is not talking is there something going on that I don't know about. You know what she said and I quote ‘well you're kind of big and black and scary’ which took me aback and like I tell my students make sure you choose your words carefully because you don't get a second chance to make a first impression I had to go through the category of stuff in my head from a to Z, where A will get me fired immediately and Z is way too passive and will not get the point across I pulled out something around L and explained that well I'm not saying why is this kid not talking to me from August because we've had a great relationship I'm saying I'm thinking something is going on now but I did address it this way, your answer speaks more to my effect on you than my effect on the child.

If you can’t get along with your boss, that's a really horrible relationship. I can deal with anything else and I have, but there are good days and bad days but when I can't stand my boss…it’s literally the reason why I left my last job.
Jerry has attempted to recruit black men to enter teaching but he has encountered reluctance based on the purpose or motivation to teach versus the motivation to pursue other fields.

I've seen, as an art major, I see lots of black male artist and I say you know, you should teach or you know it's a really stable career and it's a lot more stable than trying to live in your garret and live between the sales of paintings. But in general, I think it's a different mindset for people who want to teach. You don't go into it for money, you go into it because there is the satisfaction that you get that you can't get anywhere else and if you're motivated by money then you’re not be motivated to have a kid get a concept; it's just not the same thing.

Why do you think there are few black men as teachers?

One is definitely the money. I think when you grow up in the United States as an African-American male you see that there are ways to make money. First of all, as a man you know you're hardwired to think that you should make a living, that you should be good at it, that you should make a lot of money. The people who were lauded in the newspaper and the movies those who make a lot of money are actors, athletes; that's what we're supposed to do. In fact, my father wanted me to play for the New York Knicks until I had to break it to him that I was not that athletically gifted like that, but it took years for me to get him to realize this is just not going to happen and I never considered it. I mean I love sports as an outlet but it was never something that I knew was a possibility, so I never considered it.

You can't be like manly, manly in the classroom; you have to learn as much from your kids as they do from you. You have to respond and you have to be more transparent, you don't have to be a touchy-feely teacher but you can't just go in there and say I'm going to present this front because the kids don't really care how much you know until they know how much you care. You have to impart that, verbally, they have to be able to feel empathetically that you care about them and that's a skill that a lot of black man either don't have or don't want to work on in order to become a good teacher so they just stay away from the field.

Jerry was asked to consider how more black men could be recruited to the classroom?

I think for men you have to reach them through the idea that you could be that black male father figure that a lot of young men didn't have. That you know
you’re needed and that there a lot of lessons that you learned the hard way that you don’t want another generation of kids, especially black male kids to learn the hard way. If you approach them from that side and say, you know, you could be the person that makes a difference in somebody’s life and specifically someone who looks like you. And of course you'll be able to affect other people of other races also because they probably haven't seen that many black male teachers, also. If you specifically cater it to that and say, you know what, black children need to see a black man in a different perspective, you need to change their perceptions; some of the perceptions that people have of you that you may have of African Americans and that you need to help affect that change but I think it’s definitely much more effective if you start with children.

What advice would you give to a newly recruited black male teacher?

Be who you are and don’t hide your experiences from your kids; fix them so that they’re age appropriate. Everything that you do, all the things that you say, as much as it’s unfair, you are not allowed, certainly the way other people are, you're not allowed to lose your temper in public. There's absolutely no way you can have egregious offenses, you have to learn that this is an even more magnified microcosm of the rest of the white dominated world and you have to act accordingly. I mean there's nothing wrong with that, we have to do that on a daily basis; it's something that we do for survival whether it's in the business world or just so that we don't get arrested from walking here to here down the street. Be yourself but realize that you will always be on display and just get used to that and act accordingly.

**Ben Robinson**

Ben Robinson teaches science at a charter school in central Las Vegas. He is 26 years old, from Chicago, Illinois with a Bachelor’s degree from Brigham Young University Idaho. He’s completed one year of teaching. Ben’s path to education started with the responsibility for his life switching hands just days after his birth.

I was adopted at about three days old all my sisters and brothers were adopted as well except for an older brother but he passed away when we were younger. I have six siblings but I also have brothers and sisters” [on his biological dad’s side and two from his adoptive parents].

Ben along with his brothers and sisters were adopted by parents of Irish and Swedish lineage. This is the Brady Bunch of a totally different makeup. Two white parents adopt 6 African American children and in addition to their biological children,
raise all of them under the Mormon faith in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago. He
eventually met his biological father who, until contacted by Ben, never knew Ben was
born. Ben and his siblings also made contact with his birth mother by phone but “she just
seemed really weird and I just never wanted to really to meet her [in person]”. He
discovered that his birth mother had additional children besides the 6 whom his adoptive
parents raised; he doesn’t know how many. That uncertainty could have also been
applied to Ben’s life had he not have been adopted by his mother and father. To describe
his family’s income during his childhood Ben response was:

It was pretty good; we were probably like upper-middle class because we have a
lot of brothers and sisters and a lot of them had like disabilities and so a lot of
stuff [money] went to that. A lot of expensive children, as my dad would
always tell us; he always let you know that's why you're not getting this but
there was never any worry about money. My dad was very good at keeping a
tight leash on everything.

Ben’s high school educational experience was tumultuous. He stated that his
older sister was “a horrible example”. The message he perceived from her was that you
were supposed to have fun and enjoy high school. “I did really bad and I didn't get along
with teachers at all.” He failed two of his classes “really bad” and had to repeat those
two classes. During those repeat classes he some “absolutely amazing” teachers.

I absolutely hated, hated, hated my biology teacher in my freshman [year] and
so when I did the retake I had this other guy who was he was originally a
personal trainer and I loved this class. I just liked the way he talked, the way he
did everything and so I kind of picked up from that. Before that I hated math
and I had two ridiculously horrible math teachers but then I got this one. He
was saying he would like to bike across America that weird stuff but that he
teaches logarithms he dropped a log from the ceiling [for one lesson]. These
two teachers were just super random and then I had a few other really good
teachers in my junior and senior year, so I started picking up my grades doing a
lot better and so after that I was kind of a lot better. It was through those
experiences that I realized that even if I hated the teacher to just suck it up and
do good anyway. It was the math teacher who had taught me that because he
would go through my grades and stuff and sometimes he saw how much better I was doing in math, but like in some classes, English, horrible at that, getting better but he was the one who kind of sat me down and showed me like, just put your nose to the grind and sort it keep going. He was a good guy. It’s not like I was at a small school; it was a big school, about 4,000 kids.

I got ready to go to college and I went to one school in Chicago, hated it. I think it was just the major I picked because I didn't really know what I wanted to do and so I like, I did decent but not good at all.

After a year of attending Harper College in Palatine, Illinois just outside of Chicago, Ben received a scholarship offer to attend BYU Idaho in Rexburg, Idaho. “I thought free college, so of course I'll go. So I went there for I think it was just a semester” and then he left for New York City where he would perform his Mormon missionary work for two years. While in New York, he realized he liked history and thought that being a history teacher was worth pursuing once he got back to BYU Idaho.

When I got back from there [NY] I found that the sad truth was, like you know, the market was saturated with history teachers and I thought, ‘well I have to have something else to do because I wanted to get a job, not to just have a degree. In one of my general education classes was Biology I and I found that I was really good about picking all the stuff up and then as I learned more about it, I liked it, so biology and history because I like it, biology, because I'm good at it.

After returning to BYU Idaho, Ben took more classes than the full time load to earn his Bachelor’s degree in 4 years, excluding the two years spent on his mission to New York City. “I was taking like 19 to 21 credit hours”. During his first two years of study in Idaho Ben didn’t receive too much support from his family. He explained that he received little help because he was the second oldest and his parents had to focus their attention on his younger siblings, who were still in junior and senior high school. He received some words of support from his mom through phone calls. “When I went back to BYU I had pretty much my two friends; I had two main friends I hung out with. He
got married 4 months after returning to Idaho.” He received support from her while completing his Bachelor’s degree with some demands attached.

[When we go married] my wife was just about to finish and so she was like, you need to hurry up and finish. She doesn’t like Rexburg, she likes Las Vegas, so it was kind of a good force of support. She was always nice enough not to say, oh my gosh you haven't graduated yet, but it was sort of always in the back like hurry up and graduate, but get some money so don’t have to live in an apartment anymore.

For academic support he “especially through the history department, I had really good academic supports”.

I really liked all the different teachers I had even if they were like super tough. We had really super small classes, we had anywhere from 8 to 13 kids per class so there was plenty time to speak with your professors.

Ben completed his Bachelor’s with a dual major in Biology and History. He will begin work on a Master’s next year. Ben’s work experience outside of education consisted of one retail job. In the junior and senior year of high school and into the first year at Harper College Ben worked as a teacher at a daycare and a counselor. After his return to Idaho he worked as a computer analyst and a credit counselor. He liked history and science but what motivated him to become a classroom teacher?

I think in the back of my mind it was those really great teachers that I had and other than that, it was just I don't know, I like interacting with people and I really like the subjects. I like you know the fact that to get ready for a lesson, I just get to do the stuff that I like to do anyway like reading science articles and read history books.

What characterizes African American men in the teaching field from African American men in other professions?

I guess I like trying to be a good role model and especially like at our school we don't have a lot of black students and so they are the small minority and the principal will say, ‘oh they look up to you’. I had one student she had a really
hard time because she was the only black kid in the whole class but it was always fun because I could relate to her a lot easier and it was weird because even with my nonblack students I was I'm mulatto, I was half-and-half and some kids, it seems, saw in a light that they wanted to in he's a really dark white person or a really light dark person.

How do your perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American influence your professional interactions in the classroom?

I think I'm prone to hit on like edgy things a little bit more. I'll say things; sometimes I'll have other teachers say, ‘only you could get away with that Mr. Robinson’. Like we were doing a unit and the N-word was brought up during the history unit and nobody wanted to say it [talk about it] and I'm like no, that's a word that was used. You don't walk up to someone and say, ‘hey you're a this’ and then kind of explained to them that when you see it, it's a historical context thing and is not like the same as the F-word; it actually can hurt just the same but it means something else, so we were kind of talking about that. I like to, I don't like to shy away from things that they're going to interact with; they live in a very diverse city and they need to know what's proper and what's not and so being African-American I think I feel more comfortable with that.

We grew up in a place that was a predominantly white place. My grandmother didn't like any of us because she was actually a bigot so my mom never really enjoyed that too much. We had neighbors who would say stuff, you know kids we couldn’t hang out with because we were the only black kid in the neighborhood. I like sharing those experiences with kids because it I think it sometimes, especially at that school, the kids didn't think that existed; that stuff only happens in the movies and I explained that, “no it happens”. It's a nice thing because when they can confront that, they can immediately identify that that's horrible and I can say, ‘okay now that you know it's horrible you'll take that and keep it and bring it with you instead of just ignoring it’.

Ben is not sold on being a teacher through retirement. With his Master’s he may go into Administration.

Administration gets control over what they can see. I just like the fact that if you have a bad teacher like, you can say to that teacher, it's not a right to teach, it's a privilege to teach, just like any job, it's a privilege to have that job. I'm always really happy when I see administration make a good call like hey, this person shouldn't be here anymore or we need to implement this and or do this. Ben also likes chemistry and has always thought about becoming a chemical engineer.
I'm happy and I enjoy teaching and I might as well just stick with it for as long as I can have the energy.

Ben has not tried to recruit any black men into the teaching field but he did share some responses as how to attract more black men to education.

I came to the conclusion that most of the kids decide what subjects they like in middle school and the whole thing is, if you get a bad teacher it can change or if you get a really good teacher and you get lucky, like me, it can change that. That's where I like teaching at middle school cause now I have a few kids that I would've never imagined at the beginning of the school year would like science but now next year they will have me for science but they're still super excited and so I think that, yeah, the younger that you expose African-Americans to the possibilities of going post high school [to teach] you're going to get it probably still to be a minority of people going into that, but there will be a bigger group.

He would advise newly hired black male teachers to:

Share your unique background cause the whole thing is, finding males in teaching is pretty rare, and finding black males in teaching is even more rare. You get to bring a completely different perspective and you need to share that. It's just a unique perspective you get to bring and just have fun with it.

**Anthony Morgan**

Anthony Morgan is a Third grade teacher at a charter school located on the Historic West Side of Las Vegas. Anthony is a 41 year old native of Las Vegas and graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas with his Bachelor’s degree in Education. He has 14 years of teaching experience.

Anthony grew up in a Two-parent household as his mother and step-father’s only surviving child, but one of his biological father’s 11 children. His mother married his step-father when Anthony was 6 months old. His parents gave birth to another child who died soon after birth. Anthony laughed as he discussed his family’s income during his childhood.
I thought I was rich. I never wanted for anything. My mother’s the youngest of 14 [children], so we had a nice family structure. My dad worked at the hotels. My mom worked at the hotels, my dad worked at the hotels, both my dads worked at the hotels. My biological father did well, he had a few dollars. Then my dad, he started working at the dump. At the dump back then, you know, he had [money]. We were considered, I guess middle-class. The States, you know, growing up in the States, was considered, if you lived in the States people thought you were living quite well. [Regal Estates was middle class enclave in the city’s Historic West Las Vegas]

In addition to being “blessed” with a rich and supportive family structure Anthony also had a “phenomenal” educational experience in high school. He attended, in his words, one of the best schools on the west coast. Anthony also had a peer group that consisted of some model students.

‘Strive for excellence was the motto’, and we did. Growing up our friend Tony Hicks and Andre Grove, they made being black and smart cool. These dudes were of phenomenal, so I looked up to them. Andre is a doctor, he's a chiropractor, he went to USC. Tony Hicks is an engineer. Dudes were smart. They were athletic, too. They were athletes and brainiacs; they made smart cool! ‘Cause you know, back then, being black and if you black; people always said ‘you think you white.’ But the one thing, you know, I will say I was lazy, but I did just enough. I separated myself from the average black you know, put myself here but if I were to put in the effort I could've been here [motioned with hands at an elevated height]. But me being here was considered better than the... You know

Anthony was asked if, at the time, he knew that he was doing just enough to get by. His answers reflected back on what he put a higher priority on during high school. He called it multi-tasking.

’Cause afterschool we went straight to Jo Mackey and we just played basketball. I don't even know why I played basketball, just hanging out with friends, I wasn't a basketball player. I watched TV, didn't read a lot. I'd be on the phone, watching TV, doing homework and listen to the radio, all at once; but I did my work though. Tony and I were talking about it. He's like, ‘man, just imagine if we ’da read more.’ But again, like I said, if I’d of put the time in like I could have, should have, then who knows. If I’d had that effort I probably wouldn't be a teacher now, I probably be doing something else. For real, I probably...
‘Cause I wanted to be a lawyer, so I probably would've been a lawyer or something non-educational, if I'd of put that [effort] like I had the capacity to.

Anthony carried many of his academic habits with him during his collegiate experience. His athletic prowess created opportunities, but unlike high school, “getting by” wasn’t part of the recipe for success in college.

I was supposed to have a scholarship for football at the University of Utah, it was for football, but I wanted to play baseball. And the head coach came and I got to talking about baseball and he was like, Ok. He called me like, well, we're going to go in a different direction. But nobody had told me, hey, get to school then you could walk on for baseball and at least you have a secured scholarship for football. So my boy was like, let's go down to the Southern. I went down the Southern; I was down there for two hours…didn't like it. Just that being an only child growing up… With everything at my beck and call, when I went down there, the surroundings, it just wasn't…couldn't do it. So, I didn't go to school that fall but I went to ASU that spring and I tried out for the baseball team. I had to walk on and I made it.

The results gained from continuing his self-admitted mediocre study habits and “multi-tasking” at ASU were the final sign he had to make a change in how he approached college life. “My grades were terrible!”

I had, like a 1.25 [GPA]. I tried out for baseball that spring and in the fall I mean I had to work, like, come the fall and the next spring I had to work; I had to bust my butt. But again, I didn’t have those great study habits. I knew that…in high school; you just do enough to just [to pass]. I don't want to say it came easy but, but I mean. At ASU they have underground libraries, so I would have to go and get in the cubicle and sometimes I would read the whole page and not know what I read because my mind would always wander, so I would have to buckle down and focus. It was rough, but I got through it, so it was cool. After that I left ASU, went to the community college, and then went to UNLV and still wanted to be a lawyer then I changed my major to education.

Anthony graduated from UNLV in 1998. During the 9 years after his high school graduation Anthony followed the path of friendship to Southern, baseball to ASU and the familiar surroundings of home to the Community College of Southern Nevada and UNLV. He had a combination of supports that were queried during the interview;
financial, social and academic. His family provided some financial help and found part-time work for him. “My mom and dad were always my support.” Socially, Anthony had plenty of friends and peer study groups. Academically, Anthony felt that he had some great professors who were responsive to his needs. Anthony recalled 4 of the jobs that he held while taking his Undergraduate classes.

He worked at Republic Services for a couple of months; the job was a little more that he was cut out for. “That garbage dump is a beast.” His dad also didn’t want him to get lured away from school by what appeared to be good money. Every week his dad would tell Anthony, “I don’t want you to do this.” Anthony’s stint of equal length at Domino’s Pizza was cut short because he didn’t like the work. He also had a short employment at Al Phillips, The Cleaner. The work that he recalled the most was the time he spent working for his mom working with Foster care children. Those experiences motivated him to decide on education as his future.

The love for children; I’ve always been good with kids. When I wanted to be a lawyer, but I still knew I wanted to work with kids. So most likely I would deal with them if they were in trouble so I was like, ‘what can I do to be proactive.’ So I said let me try this teaching thing. The rest is history.

Anthony’s perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American have influenced his professional interactions in the classroom? Here he describes how:

They [the kids] don't see us [black men] at all and when they do see us they see us in a negative light. They see us through media…They see us in three perspectives of life. They see us as athletes, they see us as entertainers, and they see us as thugs. Entertainers give back from a distance and musicians from a distance and thugs have more influence on our youth than anybody because kids are reaching out for love, their parents... The fathers is absent in the household. They [kids] just want love and it's like a family [gangs, crews and cliques]. When they bring them in, it's a family, but as a family we have to go do A,B,C & D to maintain our [drug culture and violence are part of that social structure]
As a teacher, especially seeing us in elementary, it's like oh my goodness. So they gravitate towards us. You know I've had kids that called me daddy. Even the quote, unquote bad kids; they gravitate towards us because they feel that real, sincere love that we're giving them. If we had more men in education, more black men in education, we could flip this [negative statistics on black boys] on its head so, so quickly.

Anthony’s current charter school has intentionally hired more African American teachers. The school now has ten black male teachers (not including administration and support staff). As a result he believes there was an immediate impact on student behavior and an increase in the collective effort of the staff to improve student achievement.

It makes me give that much more of an effort. I can't change the role in one day but it makes me give more of an effort because I know what they're lacking at home as far as that positive role model, male role model, so my perspective has to be different. When I leave the school, I'm still in the neighborhood. So I see a difference from those who leave the job and go elsewhere, so I see it from community aspect of it. I know if I don't step my game up and give 110%, it's a rough place. But also when they see me in the community, they work harder for me because they see me just not as a teacher but as a real person. I tell folks [other teachers] go to a baseball game, just go to something; you'll be surprised with those kids who do for you.

Anthony provided some clear examples of how he thinks the character of African American men in the teaching field is different from African American men in other professions.

We are very minute, I saw two or three actual classroom teachers [black men] from my whole K-12 [experience]. When you go in, when you choose education, you go in trying to change the mindset of a child's life. When you’re doing this [full time], black men in other professions granted, they go do what they do and they may volunteer to help, like, ‘hey you can do it’ blah, blah, blah. But at the end of the day they still go back to their 9 to 5 at what they do but as a teacher, your mindset as a teacher is like, hey I chose this field specifically so I could help mold and mentor this child to be something successful in life. Because again black men in other professions, they may volunteer or they may choose but it may not be a everyday basis; I'll get to you when I can, especially if they have a family, they have kids and whatnot. I think every day versus once a week, once a month, once a year, you know it's crucial.
In this example Anthony gives the example from his own experience dealing with one particular teacher.

I had one in summer school; he was one of the best teachers I ever had. He thought government in the first session. In other classes we clowned in class, we capped, we had our nutritional break and [then] went to his class. It was a whole different mentality. I had 102% is class. He had high expectations and demanded excellence from his classes. He got it. I mean class was like night and day. He wrote something on my paper and I still have it to this day. It was just like, ‘it's great having you in class, and hey you’re going to do something special in life’ and blah, blah, blah, blah. I had a daddy in the household [but it was helpful] just to get some outside perspective on what I can do in life, that was cool. Like I said my uncles, great uncles, it was just a big family of support but again hearing it from outside of that circle was cool.

Has Anthony recruited black men into the field of education? His cousin became a sub; “he used to sub for me so I don't know if that made him want to teach”. His cousin has been a high school English teacher for a few years now. Anthony displayed unease when asked to describe why he thinks it is so hard to get black men to teach.

If teaching were dominated by men, the pay would be higher and more men would be involved. I was talking to somebody last week and they said “teaching isn't sexy”, in a sense where it doesn't draw black men in, because you have schools that are giving free education to go to school to be a teacher so why [aren't they taking advantage]… One, it's the pay. Two, again it's dominated by women especially in elementary. I'm one of 19 at [my school] in elementary that's a lot of estrogen I have to deal with.

The athletes say, “I would play this game for free” but I still need this five year, eight bazillion dollars a year contract; I've still got to feed my family. I think men who go into education, they do it genuinely for the love of the kids and I think they know consciously that they do make a difference and they will make a difference and they don't care [about making high salaries]. I think they know that the pay is not [a] monetary [reward] but it's the reward of seeing the child be successful in life. My mindset is, if I don't do it, who will?

We don't have a lot of black males going to school [college] as it is, in the first place so that narrows the pool down and you have these other businesses that are more sexy and attractive.
Changing the number of black men who enter education has been difficult. How do you think more black men could be recruited to teaching careers?

If I knew that answer, I would be the best recruiter ever. I don't know because we have schools offering free schooling for educators and I made if that doesn't do it what will.

I'm stumped with that because the thing is when we were in school we didn't see any black men. I don't think some realize how important their presence is. Like Pete Rock and CL Smooth [said], ‘It's not the presents, it's the presence’. This may be the start of something new; that these black men [who] enjoy what they do and go out and attempt to recruit. Like hey, this is the pleasure, this is what you get out.

Anthony has been a teacher for 14 years and this may be his last in the classroom.

He has been tapped to serve as the Dean at his elementary school.

I might hate it because I never wanted to be in administration. I'll look at it as [in] this position I get to mentor the teachers, I get to help them in their classroom management and I'll go in, and I still want to go in and help. I want to be proactive. I want bridge the community. I need to reach out and not only affect the 26 kids I have in my classroom but now the 500 kids in elementary.

When asked about the reasons why he might leave the teaching profession Anthony reflects back to the reason he got into teaching.

I don't see myself even if I was to retire, I would still do something with kids so I'm always the educator until they put me in the ground. It may not be in the building itself, the four walls or the brick and all that, but I'm going to still educate for life… If I hit the lottery, I mean really?

What advice would you give to a newly recruited black male teacher?

Stay away from the mamas; when they see a black man in education, especially in elementary…a lot of women love men through their children, especially when they see you taking on an interest and caring for their child. They gravitate towards that so be careful how you speak to them. You are here to educate, stay focused. You have to stay focused; it's about what you can do with the mind to get these kids educated.

Be true to yourself and be true to these kids. Love what you do, as a teacher you can't half-ass it. As a teacher when you half-ass, you know how they say is the
glass half-empty or half-full. If you half-ass it as a teacher, it's half empty, if the other half is empty then those kids are being left behind.

Kendrick Washington

Kendrick Washington teaches 4th grade at a CCSD Title 1 school in east Las Vegas. He is 28 years old and originally from Los Angeles, California. He is a graduate of Fisk University and in his third and final year of a Master’s program at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Kendrick is entering his second year of teaching.

Kendrick has two younger sisters and is the son of a single mom. He described his family’s economic standing during his childhood as “impoverished; state assistance, Section 8, Welfare and other stuff.” His mother gave birth to Kendrick when she was 18, yet she still attended community college to obtain her Associates. When Kendrick was in the 5th grade, his mom was able to begin enrolling in classes toward her Bachelor’s degree. His mother made sure Kendrick attended Preschool, Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. She instilled the appreciation for learning in Kendrick at an early age. He had an educational experience that he believes was great, with a couple of exceptions.

I just had phenomenal K-6 teachers; when I left Kinder I was reading. I was confident my reading skills; I mean I'd add and subtract and read leaving Kinder. I was just confident. I think because of that confidence it carried over to each grade and I wasn't afraid to raise my hand and answer questions; I wasn't afraid to hear no, this isn't right and I wasn't afraid to say I don't understand this and I need help. As I got older, nine through 12, or seven through 12; let me back up, in seventh and eighth I was in gifted classes. I did extremely well in everything except reading and language arts. It always seemed like I had an issue with my reading and language arts teacher and we had them for two periods so whatever I got in one period carried over into the other. I excelled at everything except for Reading and Language Arts and I began to hate reading. And I used to love reading. [Then in] seventh grade, eighth grade and in ninth grade I had a pretty cool teacher for my International Baccalaureate Program. I kind of fluffed my way through his class; we just had
a really good relationship. So the grades...He was kind of generous. I really didn't have to study but I did just make sure I knew that I dotted my I’s cross my T’s, four lack of a better expression. I did whatever I needed to do to turn that grade that required a little bit more effort than what I typically would put in or needed to put in.

In high school Kendrick excelled. He became involved in academic decathlon, speech and debate, mock trial; “All the stuff that nerds do. I'm not very athletic so being on the court was never for me. When his family moved to Las Vegas between his sophomore and junior years, Kendrick was met with some challenging situations.

I missed my friends and not being in the International Baccalaureate Program and everything that I had worked so hard for my sophomore year. Like I wanted to be Student Body President in my senior year in high school, and like I was involved in everything on campus except for sports; it was life-changing for me to move here. I do consider Vegas home now. I was just miserable my junior and senior year.

Once we moved to Vegas my junior and senior year I attended Clark high school and entered the state Academy of Finance. I was kind of bored at Clark and I just couldn't wait to get out of high school and go to college. I did have a good relationship with our principal living in the area of Clark he asked me to sit on different committees and things of that nature. So although I didn’t have the best relationship with my teachers, I did have a good relationship with the school principal.

Kendrick’s Las Vegas experience was not all as miserable as Kendrick thought at the time. While he had teachers who attempted to discourage him, he had received a balance of support from other teachers who seemed to recognize his potential.

My senior year I flew out to Dartmouth; Andre Agassi sponsored the trip, my mother and I went to Dartmouth and I had my interview at Dartmouth and we came back. Our class valedictorian had also applied to Dartmouth. My English AP teacher told me that if I went to Dartmouth I would flunk out the first semester. I think that was like life-changing for me in my senior year. Also dealing with my Government AP teacher; she would say that I didn't turn in homework and discard it in the trash can. So I had to drop my Government AP class and take regular government because of the issues that we were having.

I'll never forget it, I was really good friends with my junior and senior English teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Smith. This was really life changing I would always get
C’s on my English papers in Mr. Parks class, my sophomore English teacher. And Mr. and Mrs. Smith would pick me up in the mornings and take me to school because it was way on the other side of town closer to the University and they really looked out for me, they made sure that I ate and made sure that I had a computer at the house, just like small tokens that I am forever grateful for. One day I was in the car reading Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*. I read the first three chapters; he asked me what I’d read, and I couldn’t tell him. He really laid into me, he told me I was too bright and too gifted to be bullshitting my education and wasting my talent. It kind of took me aback because I had never had a teacher speak to me in that tone. Like everybody always told me how wonderful I was but nobody ever told me that I was human and I was making life-changing mistakes by not really working to my full potential and he told me that Steinbeck’s grapes of wrath has a common theme of deterministic forces, deterministic force is a force greater than yourself, a force that seems to operate according to incomprehensible laws and makes you want to either fight or flee and he said you’re always talking about how hard life is and things have been challenging and you want to stick it to the man. Well, this is social protest literature and if anybody can relate to this novel, you can. I read that book with diligence after that conversation. My final paper was worth 3000 points in my class because every paper doubled in point value. I wrote on deterministic forces in the *Grapes of Wrath* and I got 2999, one point short. Mr. Parks told me that, ‘I don’t want to think that you’ve done it ‘cause you haven’t arrived but it was a beautiful paper’.

Needless to say, Kendrick made a few important decisions about his college choice based on some of the experiences he had during his high school years.

I decided to attend an HBCU because up until that point I knew that I was a black male but I didn't identify with other black males given that I wasn't really surrounded by them in my education environment, I had a very much so assimilated attitude towards our society. Thanks to two of those teachers I attended a historically black college and university because I needed to learn more about myself and to become comfortable being a black man. And in 12 through 16 were the best years of my life. We read *Mis-Education of the Negro* first semester of freshman year and I really identified with that book because it made me think that if the teachers that I had previously K through 8 that they felt sorry for me because I was poor black boy in class or if they really saw the potential that I possessed. So I grappled with that for a while; it's not really a story but that study, it made me realize I wasn't a mis-educated black person and it began to help me become comfortable with my racial identity.

With the support of his mom, who actually earned her Bachelor’s degree the same time that Kendrick graduated from high school, Kendrick graduated from Fisk within 4
years. Due to his mom’s increased income, she was able to help Kendrick financially
during his undergrad. He had a cohort of friends at Fisk that served as a peer support
group. So how did he get into teaching?

This is my third career. My first job out of college was working with the
Civilian Complaint Review Board, which is an independent agency in New
York City and it was my job to investigate allegations of misconduct against
members of the New York City Police Department. That was my first job
career out of college; I did that from 2005 to 2009, so about four years. When I
returned to Vegas I was a claims adjuster for AAA. Pretty straightforward and
now I’m teaching.

I entered the ARL program through Teach for America that was our Gateway
and teach for America has a lot of different components in part to make sure we
are highly successful in the classroom. We have a coach that's there to say you
know how you impacting the community which your students live in and are
you volunteering where your children see you outside of the classroom, what do
you want to do once your tenure with TFA is completed, so there's a lot of
positive reinforcement that TFA has set in place. I think my elementary
experience always made me wonder if I could be a teacher.

Kendrick’s perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American
influence your professional interactions in the classroom.

A lot of attitudes towards me are predetermined. It makes life sometimes
internally, a little difficult because I feel as though instead of giving me the
benefit of the doubt with having a license and being a teacher, that I still have
something to prove because of the color of my skin without you taking a
moment to speak with me about the content of my character, so I am constantly
having to go above and beyond in everything that I do really because I am a
black male.” [Yet] The race card I don't use and I don't pull. I don't want to say
I can't do this because of a black male or I'm being treated this way because I'm
black. I mean, in certain situations, yeah, that is that persons view because
you're a black man. I guess one way, it is conveyed to my children is that you
do what you have to do to achieve, regardless of everything else that's going on
around you. So it's up to me to make sure that my kids have a safe haven that
they're able to communicate, that their thinking critically and analytically, that
they can write and convey those internal sentiments and put them out on paper
and so it's just carried over into a classroom environment. I just want to
emphasize that I do teach in a Title I school, I teach to reach those who look like
me and come from backgrounds similar to mine. I want to be in the low income
area. I want to be with the Brown children and let them know that it's okay to
speak this way in my classroom. It's okay to be smart and it's okay to say “my
bad” on the playground. It's okay to have that duality, it’s okay to be who you are.

What characterizes African American men in the teaching field from African American men in other professions?

One of my fourth graders yesterday just said you're not going to just let me pass your class? You're right, I'm not, you're going to work to the best of your ability in my class; blood, sweat and tears every single day.

Kendrick hasn’t recruited any black men into teaching for reasons he addressed.

The pay; it's not something that an educated black male does. Dollar amount, the prestige that's associated with it [teaching], those are a few of the factors that I don't want to say prohibit kind of inhibit Blacks, in general, of entering the field of education. As we got into post Brown [v Board] and more opportunities began to open up for African-Americans... Go be a lawyer, go be a judge, go be a scientist or go be that Dr. Not, go teach. Not, go be an educator. You know, I went to Fisk, where one in six black PhD's attend for undergrad, it was never go teach, it was go make that dollar. I think for many, that's the motivation to achieve because many of us have not been coming up in education as a vehicle to get you to that better life monetarily.

Kendrick was asked if he had any thoughts on how to recruit more black men into teaching?

You know, until two weeks ago I was thinking about going back attaining the JD because since the third grade I wanted to be a judge. It's been really hard for me to reconcile a lifelong dream and a newfound passion. Trying to find a balance between the two; like I know I don't want to be in the courtroom, I know that. I don't want to deal with any adults, we all have our own issues, I know that. I fall in love with the potential that children possess and I've seen the transformation that a child can undergo; getting confidence from saying I can't, to I can and I will, setting goals for themselves.

I don't know, teachers are a rare breed of any race. The art of teaching and the gift of teaching isn't something that everyone possesses and just because you're formally educated with the collegiate degree doesn't mean that you can teach because it take something more than just having knowledge. It's truly a craft and an art; it's something that you have to really be dedicated to. How to recruit any good teacher? Man, I think if we knew the answer to that question we would really see a paradigm shift in the state.
How long do you plan on being a classroom teacher? And what reasons could force you to leave education?

[In the] classroom? I'm not sure; in education, until my dying breath. I want to be more involved in my kids’ day-to-day lives and not just what the classroom leads me to. I personally, on some weekends, I make home visits. You know I go spend time with my children outside of the classroom.

If we don't allow our students the opportunities to make mistakes and learn from them, they'll never develop critical and analytical thinking skills. We spoon feed our children so much that were not developing persons; were developing people who can regurgitate. If I were to leave education it would be because I'm not given the freedom to develop people but to have them regurgitate a bunch of useless information.

What advice would you give to a newly recruited black male teacher?

Keep your head up. It gets easier. Really look inside of you and think about your life journey and all the obstacles and the prejudices and stereotypes, how many times you had to defy the status quo and insist that you were better than you had to be. Your kids are in that same boat and remember that at all times because it motivates you to do something greater than the teacher next door and you doing something more for your kids when you began to really internalize that it brings out your fight, it brings out your passion, it brings out your joy.

Donald Drew

Donald Drew teaches 5th grade at a CCSD school on the western outskirts of Las Vegas. Donald is 47 years old, born and raised in Las Vegas. He earned his Bachelor’s degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He has 18 years of experience teaching. Donald’s path to teaching is just as indirect and delayed as all of the other participants in this study despite coming from a long line of educators starting with Donald’s great grandmother and each subsequent generation, albeit women.

Donald was an only child raised in his two-parent household by his mother and stepfather. He had other siblings; his step-father had 7 other children that didn’t live with
Donald. His biological father had three other children. Donald described the family situation as “kind of complicated” because of the amount of children involved. He considered his family income to be upper-middle class because of his parents combined income from his mom’s teaching salary and his dad’s management position at a casino.

Donald’s family structure and his parent’s professional positions did not make his educational experience a given success.

I started off school very, very poorly, I was a D…C, D, F student. I wasn't motivated, didn't care, didn't see the importance of it but in six grade my mother started working on her Master’s degree. I saw how hard she worked and it kind of made me feel sorry for her but then it kind of just clicked, this is what you have to do to be successful; this is how hard you have to work. They never had to get on me for grades anymore, I started to get straight A's in sixth grade; just took off after that.

Freshman year in high school I actually got really good grades, I was a good student. I got straight A's through ninth and 10th grade or actually no, I got straight A's ninth-grade and I got my first C in geometry in 10th grade; it never made sense to me. And then I got straight A's in my junior year and a couple of B’s my senior year so I was one of the top students.

Donald also worked from the age of 11 years old while he operated a large paper route until he was 14. At 15, he falsified his birth certificate to say he was 16 so he could officially enter the workforce. He worked as a porter, a cook, and eventually assistant manager; all this while in high school. “I was always raised to work and so I wanted to earn mine. I was super independent.” He left hospitality for a retail job, quickly making his way up to manager. “I realized retail is not where I wanted to be.” Donald had self-motivation but he also had the support of his family and friends to do well in school and work.

I did get a scholarship and I think the scholarship motivated me because I could only do so poorly; but my mother was always there for me and my family was a strong education family. My friends; I mean I was kind of in with the what they
called the nerdy, brainiac, egghead group in high school and a lot of them, we went to the University together and we kind of just helped each other along. It just seems like I always had support; whether I needed it or not, I just had supports.

Donald started his college career at the University of Arizona on a full academic scholarship with his major as Communications with an emphasis on Broadcast Journalism.

My first year in college I did like a lot… I got into the party life a little much and my grades kind of dipped. Then I realized I got tired of that very quickly so my grades went right back up.

He left Arizona to return home and attend UNLV where he completed his Bachelor’s in Communications within a 5 year time period. Donald dove into broadcasting during his undergraduate studies and immediately after graduation.

In college, I quickly got into TV. I worked at both channel 3 and that channel 8. I was just a runner, a page, doing everything volunteer and then I did my internship. Channel 8 hired me as a cameraman/sports reporter. I did that job and got transferred to Yuma, Arizona with the station called KYMA, it’s a sister station of KLAS TV here, where I was assistant station manager with a staff of 13 people that worked in the whole station. I had to learn to do everything. Even being assistant station manager, I had to get on the truck and do the camera many times or be impromptu and borrow someone’s clip on tie and hold the microphone and do an interview. I worked in the field for a year but I knew as soon as I did, the first day of my internship, oh my goodness this is not what I wanted to do with my life. After that, I just didn’t like that very much, I quit…I also was a dealer for 10 years.

After earning his Bachelor’s degree Donald got married…to a teacher.

I found I was going to school willingly without being asked no pay or anything going with my girlfriend who became my wife and then going with my mother who was still teaching at the time and I’d do things like read.

His mom was a teacher. There was a natural alliance established to get Donald to consider teaching as a career. “I loved to read to the class, go out to recess and play with the kids in elementary and then at the middle school I would also do some reading.” He
was already volunteering in both of their classrooms. Donald said the recruitment campaign actually started with his mother much earlier in his life.

She started working on me when I started getting good grades in middle school, she’d say, ‘you know you should think about teaching’. I looked at my mother's life and I said your job never ends, you always... Dad comes home and he can watch TV. You come home and you have your basket of papers, you’re doing this, you’re doing that. I said no, I don't want to do that job plus he makes more money, I'd rather do something like that. I swore, I said 1000 times, I would never be a teacher.

They tag-teamed me; my mom got with my girlfriend and they sat me down and said why don't you go back and get another degree and start to teach. So I ended up with an alternate route to licensure.

He eventually succumbed to “Browbeating!” Two years later Donald had earned his Master’s in Education and became a teacher. His perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American influence his professional interactions in the classroom.

What makes me unique is I've experienced both ends of the educational spectrum; I was the kid on the bottom, I was the bad kid who was getting in a lot of fights and getting in a lot of trouble and getting kicked out of school; at one time. And I also became the kid who was the A student, the Honor Society kid, the Student Government kid. The way I approach my students is to tell them that I never count you out. I'm one of those teachers that I won't automatically down them and look at them like they're always that mistake.

I run the whole thing on my classroom style is teaching everybody to understand everybody else.

I approach the races in the same way; I mean I do a lot of history. The story I'm reading aloud now is Role of Thunder Hear My Cry; and it's [set in] 1933 dealing with some of the racism in the South in Mississippi in 1933. They hang on every word because it's kind of like that’s such a distant past but these kids nowadays; they can't even identify. But it helps them identify with people who are different.

From Donald’s standpoint, what characterizes African American men in the teaching field from African American men in other professions?
I think African-American men in the teaching field have to have a bigger feminine side, that nurturing side. I think still among us, we more so than other races, feel that the whole…child rearing is like women's work. I've gotten that a lot, oh, that's women's work, that women's work. I was raised to believe that way. It takes a strong male and female to raise a child I was always taught it takes a whole village, so I never really had those views. But, I do know that a lot of my African-American male friends they would never go into teaching because they could never handle all of those kids in the classroom.

My friends are always saying, I wouldn't do the job, they don't make enough money, and I started realizing, yeah, most of us African-American males when I was entering into college were still kind of in that poverty zone area. So when we're going to college, looking at the big dollars, I mean, a teacher salary wasn't really very appetizing and then doing that kind of work you just…you have to be kind of special. You have to be one of those that can take some of the base out of the voice, so you don't scare the kids. I mean be firm but you also have to remember to be soft and I think that's harder for us because we're raised that we have to be really hard and strong and tough in order to survive.

Like many of the other participants, Donald has not had success recruiting black men into the teaching field.

I've tried; in fact I'm still working on a friend of mine who's floundering and lost and doesn't know what to… I said, you know what, you're good with kids and you're smart why don't you get your degree to become a teacher? He's doing the same thing that I remember doing; no, no, I don't want to do that, it's not enough money, I see a hard you work, and it seems like it's a 24-hour job, blah, blah, blah. My response to him was, it may not be the best money but it's a lot more money than you're making right now.

I also tried with another one and he actually started taking the classes…one of my very best friends…when he did his student teaching he realized it wasn't for him. He said it was great in the classes but “once I got in the classroom with the kids”…he just realized he didn't like children as much as he thought he did.

Donald’s experiences have already highlighted the teaching salary range as a deterrent, but he has identified others that may explain why there are few black men as teachers.

I dealt my first six years of teaching ‘cause it was a huge pay cut going from a full-time dealer to a full-time teacher and I was married with two kids and just couldn't afford it so I dealt my first six years of teaching. I think it's the whole
thing with the children, in the way we look at children. I think we still look at that as a lot of women's work. I think the financial thing is a big one. It's like, if I'm gonna go to college, I'm gonna go to college to make a lot of money. I'm not gonna go to college to be just above where I am now.

According to Donald, recruiting more African American men to teaching may have more to do with pay but also with the true purpose or intent of education.

You gotta have a salary competitive enough and attractive enough to attract some of our top people that are in these universities.

I think we're becoming more specialized where someone's life experiences are more important than it was before. I think now that we're actually starting to change things that you can get in there and teach to your strengths. I think we're on the right path. I think education before was so narrow that honestly, I got in trouble for making the statement years ago but education to me seemed more like we were teaching conformity more than we were actually teaching thought.

Donald has taught for 18 years and plans to continue for at least another 12.

I'm going to do the 30, at least and you know I'm still enjoying it as much as I did my very first year, so I might do 40 years. I mean this is the job, I'd say it's gotten to the point now it's almost not a job it's... I would say it's who I am. I mean I am a teacher, so why not get paid for it.

I would think the only thing that would draw me away would be just that super attractive salary and benefits package that I could never get as a teacher; that would be the only thing.

What advice would Donald give to a newly recruited black male teacher?

Realize that it is a job, although it is a unique and different job, it is a job just like everything else; this job doesn't end. Spend as little time in the Teacher’s Lounge as you possibly can; there's really not a lot of good that can come out of there. Be cordial, be friendly; you know the smile is really important, show the smile but also be professional and businesslike.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify common factors shared by the study participants that were influential in choosing teaching as a career. The responses to the interview questions captured the lived experiences and perspectives of participants.
Through analysis of the participant interviews a number input variables were indentified based on their recurrence within responses.

Following numerous reviews it became apparent that the input variables each participant had would bear heavily on their decisions. I’ve come to label these important variables as advisors. Advisors are an adult in the participant’s life who helped them realize their potential and/or helped them make sense of a confounding challenge or situation. The advisors not only counseled the participant but also provided tools to help them organize their efforts, time, priorities, and ultimately the direction their lives would take as adults. The advisors fell within three different categories; educators, mothers and mentors. They delivered direct one-to-one interactions that not only met the needs of the participant during a crucial point in their lives. Advisors often modeled the behaviors they wished for the participant to emulate. The advisors were so instrumental, in many respects, they established bonds that cannot be forgotten.

Analysis of the participant interviews revealed that all of the participants identified at least one educator who exceeded their typical instructional role to mentor the participant during a critical period in their high school or early collegiate experience. These teachers demonstrated concern for the participant beyond the call of duty by expressing that they recongized the individual’s current performance and unrealized potential. These teachers provided mentoring and guidance related to academic, professional and life skills. They delivered direct one-to-one interactions that not only met the needs of the participant during that crucial point in their lives; they established bonds that cannot be forgotten.
Educators were not the only contributors to the participants’ ability to navigate the crossroads these participants encountered as young men. Mothers (parents) played a significant role in 66% of the participants decision making for collegiate and professional pursuits. Four of the 9 participants had mothers who had already earned a degree or were pursuing their own higher education degree or professional training while their sons were in school or college. These mothers modeled scholastic aspirations, determination and work ethic that participants reported as important factors in their efforts to complete their college goals.

Mentors were the third category of the participants’ advisors. While it could be argued that educators and mothers mentor in their own right, this category emerged from those instrumental adults who were supportive of the participants. Mentors had a clearly defined role which they stayed in while serving the limited, yet supportive and impactful guidance of their role. An example of a mentor is the Air Force pilot who offered assistance to Kevin during his undergrad studies as a member of the ROTC program.

The officers in the community also take part in ensuring that you have everything for your education, so you automatically become part of the officers Association and when you go to these different luncheons and things that actually walk up to you and ask you how you are doing. You know if you got a problem in math you can call me. [It was a] “I was a pilot” type thing [I can help you because from my own experience I know what you need to get there].

There were a couple of participants who had the benefit of having a combination of all three types of advisors in their lives; educators, mothers, and mentors in their lives. All of the participants had the benefit of having at least one advisor. The role of the advisor will become even more important as the themes are detailed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS/REFLECTIONS

“Men of colour, who are also of sense, for you particularly is my appeal designed. Our more ignorant brethren are not able to penetrate its value. I call upon you therefore to cast your eyes upon the wretchedness of your brethren and to do your utmost to enlighten them—go to work and enlighten your brethren”.

-David Walker’s Appeal, 1829

The purpose of this study was to identify common factors shared by the study participants that were influential in choosing teaching as a career. The interview questions were intended to gather responses which would pertain to the purpose and the guiding questions of the study. What life experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession? What educational experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession? Once in the profession, what are the lived experiences of African American male teachers? This chapter provides the findings through the researcher’s reflections and themes discerned from the participant responses to the interview questions.

Due to the existence of many of the same cultural, social and financial realities the participants lived within, a similarity of paradigms arose between the researcher’s personal experiences and those of the participant’s. “In my adolescent years I was forced to exist within a cultural dichotomy of race and class. As a young man, navigating the cultural, educational and economic variances of the educated versus less-educated military world I gained an appreciation for: diversity, discipline and most of all, education.” (See One Man’s Perspective in Chapter Two) Prior to reviewing the themes and reflections of this study, it is important to acknowledge the propensity to inflect bias
on the findings of the study based on the researcher’s own experiences. Accuracy or credibility is of the utmost importance. Attention to the accuracy of the findings was achieved through three primary strategies of triangulation, member checking and external audit (Creswell, 2008). Aspect’s of the researcher’s life experiences were so often similar to those of the respondents the researcher had to remain 100% conscious of possible bias during the analysis of the data.

The participants’ stories have been through preliminary exploratory analysis and the coding process, as described by Creswell. With further analysis in the vein of hermeneutics, the participant responses were interpreted many times over for the purpose of understanding the standpoint, or perceptions and outlook, along with the experiences which the participants described. Hermeneutic thought is a largely unacknowledged underpinning of interpretive qualitative research. (Kinsella, 2006) Through this interpretive approach five major themes emerged: Reluctance, Expectations, Interventions & Events, and Character. Minor themes will be defined within their respective major themes.

**Theme 1-Reluctance**

Not one participant chose education as their original professional field. The most striking theme, reluctance, is summed up by two statements. “I swore! I said 1000 times I would never be a teacher.” and “If you would've told me that I was going to college to be a teacher I would've laughed at you.”

I believe this purposeful, randomly selected sample is representative of the larger population of African American men in the teaching field. Purposeful sampling sets a
standard of choosing participants who are “information rich” or help the researcher to understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2008). While they eventually chose to become educators, the initial reluctance and rationales for opposition to the field were clearly stated. The theme of reluctance was the most indexed of the themes for statements and responses. The minor themes included:

- Low teacher pay (money)
- Female dominated profession or few males
- Requires feminine traits such as nurturing
- Societal lack of respect (prestige) for teachers
- Heavy workload to low pay ratio

Statements and responses related to teacher salaries or low pay were the most frequently mentioned causes for reluctance to entering the classroom. The feminine aspects of teaching, in number and behavior, were recorded still significantly, at half the frequency of low teacher pay. Discussed at only 25% of the time as salary, all of the participants made comment regarding the rarity of seeing black male teachers. The workload to pay ratio was mentioned scantily. With the exception of one mention, teaching was described as a grind.

The prevalence of comments related to money can’t be understated; money was obviously foremost on the participants’ minds as a deterrent to becoming a teacher. Considering the preceding statements came from black men currently teaching in the classroom, tempting men to enter the field will take a plan which is well researched and applicable to the widest pool of men as potential candidates to enter the education field.
“If you get a degree, you're going to get a degree in an area where you can get some economic remuneration for; education just doesn't happen to be it.” Each of the participants pointed out that economic security was a concern for them before making the decision to become a teacher.

I mean, if you’re the head of the household and you've got a family and kids and things like that and you're looking to quote, unquote advance in the middle-class…and you have a college education that gives you little bit more flexibility, you're going to be driven toward the career fields that are going to pay you more money.

Donald spoke of moonlighting as a dealer for the first 6 years of his teaching career because his teaching salary was so much less than his dealer salary. “If I'm gonna go to college, I'm gonna go to college to make a lot of money. I'm not gonna go to college to be just above where I am now [lower income].” The participants commented repeatedly that there needs to be some financial improvement in the field or an initial payout to serve as a draw for classroom teachers.

I think there has to be some type of incentive structure put in place to draw not just more African-Americans but more men into teaching and, in my opinion, it needs to be done at the college level, i.e. scholarships.

Teachers are used to sympathetic statements made by the public that teachers should get paid more but those very sentiments make it difficult to attract larger numbers of prospective teachers. One participant, who attempted to recruit, described the response he received from his “lost and floundering” friend.

I said, you know what, you're good with kids and you're smart. Why don't you get your degree to become a teacher? He's doing the same thing that I remember doing; no, no, I don't want to do that, it's not enough money, I see how hard you work, and it seems like it's a 24-hour job.
Some participants paired the financial inadequacy to other perceptions of the field. “You have to make money and teachers don't make money and [as a man, the job] goes totally antithetical to what your personality has to be like.”

The next minor theme within the theme of reluctance is related to the female aspects of the profession. At 80%, the field of education is dominated by women. This fact when combined with the required characteristics of working with children such as, patience and nurturing can serve as more detractors that lead men to be reluctant to entering the teaching field. Unfortunately, just as the study participants had to deal with it, prospective black male teachers will have to endure past the lingering attitudes that teaching is a field for women. The participants repeated comments they’d heard and some participants had to get over the own misgivings about the field. “I just naturally thought that was a woman's role to be a teacher.”

This is a factor that would have to be mitigated by men in education and society as a whole, in order to specifically engage more African American men with the profession. One participant had parents who countered the outdated societal messages which still exist.

I think still among us, we, more so than other races, feel that the whole…child rearing is like women's work. I've gotten that a lot, oh, that's women's work. I wasn’t raised to believe that way.

The problem of perpetuating education as a “woman’s job” is continued particularly by African American men. Obviously, that is something the participants have overcome but admit to once harboring the thought.
I just think we look at teaching as something that's generally for women or just not for us. The patience that it requires and there's a lot of things that come with it [that] just really are not ideal [congruent with expectations for masculinity].

One participant explained that the ratio of men in the teaching field decreases with the age of students. He posited the reasoning as teachers must exhibit more feminine traits the younger the students are.

It historically has had a reputation of being a female dominated career field, there's no question about that. I think you find more male teachers of all races at the high school level. I've substituted at the middle school level before I started this job and I would say 90 to 95% of the teachers were female and I think in elementary schools the same thing applies.

The participants gave examples of the need for demonstrating some of the characteristics some label as feminine. “I think African-American men in the teaching field have to have a bigger feminine side, that nurturing side.” Participants expressed the need to overcome their own hang-ups about displaying the characteristics of nurturing.

The African-American men in the teaching field go closer to what it always was that I tried to suppress; they are nurturing, they know how to express themselves to kids [and] to adults.

You have to be one of those that can take some of the base out of the voice, so you don't scare the kids. I mean be firm but you also have to remember to be soft.

The following statement expresses the need for socio-emotional balance that black male teachers have to acquire. On the same token failure to achieve that balance or the reluctance to ever try reduces the number of men attracted to the field

You can't be like manly, manly in the classroom. You have to respond and you have to be more transparent. You don't have to be a touchy-feely teacher but you can’t just go in there and say I'm going to present this front…they have to be able to feel empathetically that you care about them. That's a skill that a lot of black men either don't have or don't want to work on in order to become a good teacher, so they just stay away from the field.

Money was the next detractor within the theme of reluctance. Another minor theme was that of the workload teachers have in proportion to their pay. One participant
consistently referred to teaching as a “grind”. This fact about the field must be acknowledged. The only participant with a parent who is an educator made a contrasting observation when he was in middle school about the teachers’ workload.

I looked at my mother’s life and I said your job never ends, you always... Dad comes home and he can watch TV. You come home and you have your basket of papers, you’re doing this, you’re doing that. I said no, I don't want to do that job plus he makes more money, I'd rather do something like that.

One participant shared that he’s tried to recruit students and men from other fields.

I've done it, not just in teaching but in other aspects military, sports…try to drive young black males into that direction but it's a hard sale because it's [teaching] a lot of work.

African American men in the teaching field have been shown to consider a number of factors not of their own making when debating the choice of education as a profession.

A lot of our experience in schools is negative because the structure is still very racist. We need to understand that we can become empowered in this environment and make real change.

One participant reported that he’s heard plenty of comments from black men when discussing the teaching profession. The sum it up by saying, “teaching isn't sexy”. The participants, men who chose to enter the field, were able to overcome or counter the perceptions of others outside of the field.
Theme 2-Expectations

All of the participants faced expectations; the prospect of future good or profit (www.dictionary.com). The men who participated in this study received messages from a variety of sources related to expectations and direction for their futures. Expectations were often set by family members, schools, teachers, and their peers. Some participants suffered from a lack of expectations or even doubt from the same sources; a few battled societal expectations, or lack thereof, in dealing with stereotypes and/or racism. Participants expressed a myriad of ways that expectations were modeled for them. Their peer and personal perceptions of the world around them also had a profound influence on how they responded to expectations. Lastly, their behavioral responses to expectations had an impact on their path to education. All but two of the participants struggled as young men to navigate the challenges to earning a degree and eventually becoming a classroom teacher.

I knew that I going to follow my father's path into the military so as soon as I graduated I went on to the University of Montana and went into ROTC. I would say it was expected. I mean every sibling was expected to go to school for at least a Bachelor’s degree. So it was expected.

Jim didn’t have the expectation for college from his family. He seemed to be placed on a college track from his middle and high school years. “I was in the precollege program, so everybody that I was taking classes with were on track to go to college; maybe all of them didn't go but the vast majority of them did.”

For academic expectations some participants were given expectations at an early age while other participants either didn’t receive them or were permitted to overlook them. Kendrick had expectations planted by his mom during his early childhood and
once the expectation was understood, his academic performance fit his mom’s expectations accordingly. By high school Kendrick was still on par with expectations as he was in the Pre-International Baccalaureate program.

It’s funny my mother had me when she was 18 and she still attended community college [and] she obtained her Associates. My mom laid a great foundation [for me] from Kinder and pre-K. [Academic achievement] was the expectation from pre-K and K.

While academic achievement was par for the course in the previous examples, sports also provided a set of expectations for academic performance. The participants who played athletics in school were required to maintain a minimum grade point average to participate. This minimum requirement was the bar that they used to measure their academic performance.

I was pretty much involved in sports a lot and in order to play sports you had to get good grades and that was my motivation.

In high school I played football and ran track, [I took] a general course of study, so it wasn't anything out of the ordinary. I just took the course requirements that I had to take, finished those finish with a high school diploma, went to college.

Anthony nostalgically remembered his high school’s motto “Strive for Excellence” yet during further recollection he actually focused on meeting the minimum grade expectation to compete in school sports. “I don't want to say it came easy but, I knew that…in high school, you just do enough to [satisfy the requirements].”

Anthony let his grades slip early on in college, but it was the minimum expectation set by the sports program that again forced him to raise his grades.“I tried out for baseball that spring and in the fall… I mean I had to work, like, come the fall and the next spring I had to work… I had to bust my butt.”
Teachers were indicated repeatedly as sources of expectations. Expectations, good and bad, provided motivation for the participants’ behavior. In one instance a participant told the story of attending summer school at different school than his regular high school. The teacher expected that he was a high performing student because he went to a school for “gifted” students. He was an average student at his school but he lied to the teacher and told her he was an “A” student. Because the summer school teacher believed his story and set the expectation, Cameron felt the need to live up to her expectations.

I started doing these amazing projects putting a lot of time into it so that she would believe that I was this person. I started kind of faking the funk long enough that I started to actually be that [“A” student], so by the time my junior year came around I really was getting high GPAs and kind of breezing through things I ended up taking two AP classes when I was a senior; AP physics and AP calculus.

Jerry had a similar experience without lying to his teachers. He raised his performance according to what was expected at his new high school; a school for “gifted” students.

I did just enough to spread myself really thin but the educational aspects was great because it taught me that there is a procedure to succeeding; like, I'd never studied before in my life until high school because the public school education, not necessarily the lesser, but I think the teachers didn’t expect so much of their students.

An experience that Kendrick had with a teacher’s lowered expectations served as motivation for choosing a college he thought would best suit his needs. A situation that could have devastated his esteem and choices for the future.

I went to Dartmouth and I had my interview at Dartmouth and we came back, our class valedictorian had also applied to Dartmouth. My English AP teacher told me that if I went to Dartmouth I would flunk out the first semester. So I decided to attend an HBCU because up until that point I knew that I was a black
male but I didn't identify with other black males given that I wasn't really surrounded by them in my education environment, I had a very much so assimilated attitude towards our society.

Each participant pinpointed one transformative influence whether a parent, teacher, or mentor as pivotal in their achievements that made it possible for them to become educators. The participants, in some cases, had additional inputs that provided direction or models toward achievement. One participant singled out the influence of two particular African American young men from his high school; they defied stereotypes. The two statements below sum up the admiration held for them as examples of achievement. The young men went on to become an engineer and a doctor and continue to serve as role models as all three men maintain their friendship to this day. “They were athletes and brainiacs; they made being black and smart cool.”

**Theme 3-Interventions and Events**

In the previous theme the expectations laid by teachers, mothers, mentors and even some friends were identified as pivotal to the participants’ achievement. This section will highlight the specific efforts by teachers, moms and mentors who interceded during difficult periods in the lives of a participant. These interventions may be seen as the transformative efforts that led participants through academic and sometimes life changing decisions. A section detailing some important behavior changing events will follow. Even though the interventions were memorable to the participants, the ultimate effects from the interventions were seemingly downplayed.

I think the big turning point was in my junior year when I had to do a retake on some of those classes. I absolutely hated, hated, hated, my biology teacher in my freshman [year] and so when I did the retake I had this other guy. I loved his class, I just liked the way [he] talked, the way he did everything and so I kind of picked up from that. Before that, I hated math and I had two ridiculously
horrible math teachers but then I got this one; he would teach us logarithms. He taught…dropped the log off the ceiling. These two teachers were just super random and then I had a few other really good teachers in my junior and senior year, so I started picking up my grades doing a lot better and so after that I did a lot better.

After making the previous statements, Ben matter-of-factly spoke of doing better and proceeding to graduate from high school and continuing on to college.

I realized that even if I hated a teacher, to just suck it up and do good anyway. It was the math teacher who had taught me that. Because he would go through my grades and stuff and sometimes he saw how much better I was doing in math but like in some classes, English horrible. He was the one who kind of sat me down and showed me like just put your nose to the grind and sort of keep going. He went above and beyond just being a math teacher.

In the next segment the intervention described by Cameron is more dramatic.

I…flipped a switch and maybe at the end of my sophomore year, because of the really good counselor…who made me do this attendance sheet to bring [to] all my teachers and put it completely in my court so they could sign off that I’d actually come to class. After I started doing that and realizing that I could do it, it was fine.

His mom also intervened with a message that not only inspired; the intervention reminded him of her perseverance in reaching her goals. Cameron was encouraged to use her model as motivation.

I think she told me something to the effect of, you know, I had to go to school. Because she did go to college the same year, she went back to college the same year I started high school and she had to juggle all that and she beats it, she passed all four parts of the CPA exam; [at] the same time she got very close to straight A's all the way through and she was like you know you're smarter than me, you can figure it out. She kind of put it all back on me and I went ahead and I think I ended up getting at A- in that class somehow.

Jerry had a particular teacher, Mrs. Reubenstein, who helped him a great deal in high school and may have formed the mold for him to take as a teacher.

She made me tutor a fellow student who was my age and how she knew this was a girl I had a crush on? She knew I had no problem saying of course I’ll
help her. She made me tutor her knowing full well I had no idea what I was doing. She knew I didn't know how to explain it another way. She tutored me on how to tutor her and once I saw that she grasped something that was directly related to what I told her there was a spark that was lit there that I wouldn't pay attention to for many years.

Kenny had period in high school where his academic performance slipped and he was noticeably performing far beneath his abilities. An intervention occurred between he and one of his teachers that motivated him immediately and the lesson remains with him as an adult.

I'll never forget it I was really good friends with my junior and senior English teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Smith. One day I was in their car reading Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath. I read the first three chapters, he asked me what I had read and I couldn’t tell him. He really laid into me, he told me I was too bright and too gifted to be bullshitting my education and wasting my talent and it kind of took me a back because I had never had a teacher speak to me in that tone.

Cameron experienced a professor who noticed his interaction among other college students and suggested he consider Teach for America.

The professor was a writing professor. She was like, you know, have you ever considered the program Teach for America. I was looking at her sideways like are you crazy. I never…At that point I was like you must be out of your mind. I'm never going to be in the classroom but I think that planted the seed in my head.

Donald’s mother began suggesting the teaching profession to him in his formative years. She was also a teacher herself, as was her mother and her grandmother. Was it legacy? “She started working on me when I started getting good grades in middle school she’d say, you know you should think about teaching.”

Interventions also took the form of influence and encouragement from family, student groups and training groups. “Black men have unique needs for social support and the universities should provide services that can meet these needs more effectively”
The participants listed a number of groups, organizations and programs that helped them navigate the collegiate experience to obtain the degree; ROTC, fraternities, and the National Society of Black Engineers to name a few. Cameron mentioned a few programs he credited with helping him complete his Bachelor’s degree. Syracuse had the Summer Start Program where freshman could report to school early and complete 6 credits under the guidance of mentors. He also had the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) and the Black Artist League. His college of engineering also offered the Academic Excellence Workshop Program to offer students extra help with challenging courses.

The importance of programs and organizations such as those listed above is to emphasize the multiple layers of supports that were needed by the participants to earn their degrees and ultimately serving as classroom teachers. “Given the volatile rates of college enrollments for black males, the provision of a supportive academic environment that may be a protective factor against attrition is essential” (Polite & Davis, 1999). One participant, Rudy, originally claimed he didn’t have any supports to help him in college. In fact, he had used the G.I. Bill for some financial support and he had one of the most impactful stories of an intervention during his classes at the community college.

The stories the participants shared of their original reluctance to entering the teaching field, their eventual confluence with higher expectations; whether or not of their own origin, and the interventions of well-intended individuals described the formative development of these men during their life experiences. Similar to interventions, events participants described specific events that occurred in their lives.
I went to the Bronx High School of Science it’s one of the specialized high schools in New York. I think when I got there had gone from being one of the smartest kids in school to being out of place where half the school was Asian everyone there was like super bright and I think at first I really [was] intimidated. One thing that was really telling was [I] actually failed French in my first year in high school with a F and I had done French in middle school. In the same class that I failed, we have these end-of-the-year Regents exams; when I took my French Regents exam I got a 100% on it, so it had nothing to do with my ability it was just me skipping class and the Joker.

Donald had an epiphany like Cameron did except that his occurred while he was in middle school.

I started off school very, very poorly, I was a D…C, D, F student. I wasn't motivated, didn't care, didn't see the importance of it but in six grade my mother started working on her Master’s degree. She's a teacher and I saw how hard she worked and it kind of made me feel sorry for her but then it kind of just clicked, this is what you have to be successful; this is a hard you have to work. They never had to get on me for grades anymore, I started to get straight A's in sixth grade, [I] just took off after that.

Kendrick was a good student in high school but he had an event take place in his senior year of high school that instigated a cultural journey.

I think that was like life-changing for me in my senior year. Also dealing with my Government AP teacher; she would say that I didn't turn in homework and discard it the trash can. So I had to drop my Government AP class and take regular government because of the issues that we were having. Thanks to the two of them [The English teacher was mentioned previously] I attended a historically black college and university because I needed to learn more about myself and to become comfortable being a black man.

Jerry encountered life changing events that would affect his timeline but not his goals.

I left home at 16. I was working to survive so I would have to save up for two years, to go [to Fordham] for [a] semester; save up for a year to go for another semester.
Ben learned a lesson from his first real working experience, but important nonetheless. “The first job I had [was] the worst of my life. I worked retail and after I worked that job, I swore I'd go to college.”

**Theme 4-Character**

When you consider the narratives of people who have faced challenges and overcome them, a natural curiosity that comes to mind is to wonder about the character of the individuals. Without necessarily speaking about themselves, the participants described character attributes of men willing to refute commonly held beliefs that exist. They countered the gender stereotypes still pervasive in our society. They contended with gender issues perpetuated by their own gender. Some of the men in the study were able to endure subtle and overt issues directly related to their race. Analysts have long argued that behaving in a situation in which one is at risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one's group, or of being seen or treated stereotypically; causes emotional distress and pressure (Steele, 1997). The participants invalidated some gender and race-related contentions held within the African American community and other contentions held by the general population. In other words, the participants, through their own type of self-determination were able to thwart the effects of Stereotype Threat.

The African American men who participated in this study are cognizant of the actions they take on a daily basis to nurture change. They are motivated and intent on ushering change amongst the children they serve and their parents. These men are aware of the perceptions they desire to change. They expressed their wishes to serve as models in their school and local community; they hope their individual efforts also have an effect
on our larger society. The character of these men will be demonstrated in the following segments from their interviews.

I can just relate to kids a lot of them especially with the socioeconomic levels that I work with here the demographics that we have here are typically lower income a lot of single parent households and I just deal with it from that perspective. I can see them come in and I know when they're high as soon as they hit the door. I know what’s going on with them, I can relate because that was the life that I lived. You know I don't try to be a surrogate father but really just the mentor and really my relationship with my students are at a distance, I really don't, I'm not the teacher they come and hang in my room all the time. Because they know when I'm around I want them to be focused on their academics and straightening out their life.

Donald operates with the same intentions but on the elementary school level.

One of things I tell my students in my parents is what makes me stand out, what makes me unique is I've experienced both ends of the educational spectrum; I was the kid on the bottom, I was the bad kid who was getting in a lot of fights and getting in a lot of trouble and getting kicked out of school, at one time. And I also became the kid who was the A student, the Honor Society kid, the student government kid. The way I approach my students is to tell them that I never count you out.

Many of the teachers spoke of conversations they heard where students and parents said Mister so and so “doesn’t play”.

I try to tell them to keep an open mind. Some kids…they're very impressionable and a lot of them carry what they bring from home, so they're bringing baggage from home, they bring it here. I don't tolerate the ethnic jokes, the gender jokes or things like that because if you’re doing it about somebody else today you doing about me tomorrow.

The statement above applies to all children. The following statement demonstrates Jerry’s efforts with similar intentions toward African American children.

Black children need to see a black man in a different perspective. You need to change their perceptions. Some of the perceptions that people have of you, that they may have of African Americans and that you need to help affect that change but I think it's definitely much more effective if you start with children.
This situation described by Cameron demonstrates his extraordinary effort to change a parent’s frame of mind when it came to a potential learning experience for her son.

I remember that we had a kid who was essentially failing dance because he didn’t buy jazz slippers because the mother thought they were a little gay and I had to kind of tear her new one, to let her know how ridiculous that is. Like this whole idea of homophobia in the black community, as if putting on a pair of ballet slippers [is going] to turn someone into a homosexual is just bizarre and I felt that is a relationship that I had. I can say this to them, I can have this conversation.

Their personal feelings often are based so much on their internal, unspoken thoughts that they are unconsciously built into lessons that are delivered to their students.

The race card, I don't use and I don't pull. I don't want to say I can't do this because of a black male or I'm being treated this way because I'm black. I mean, in certain situations, yeah, that is that persons view because you're a black man. I'm never got a let that be my antagonist, my demise, like, I'm not that good because of [my race]…It’s not an excuse for me.

This internal struggle can be applied in every aspect of their daily experiences.

A lot of attitudes towards me are predetermined. It makes life sometimes internally a little difficult because I feel as though instead of giving me the benefit of the doubt, with having a license and being a teacher, that I still have something to prove because of the color of my skin, without you taking a moment to speak with me about the content of my character; so I am constantly having to go above and beyond in everything that I do really because I am a black male.

Many of the teachers discussed how they infuse conversations and lessons about race into the classroom lessons. Donald uses literature as a means to teach the lessons and open up class discussions about race and diversity.

The story I'm reading aloud now is Role of Thunder Hear My Cry; and it's 1933 dealing with some of the racism in the South in Mississippi in 1933. They hang on every word because it's kind of like that’s such a distant past but these kids nowadays; they can't even identify. But it helps them identify with people who
are different. I run the whole thing on my classroom style is teaching everybody to understand everybody else.

Each teacher discussed their awareness of the perceptions that teachers have a feminine, nurturing side. The needs for those characteristics don’t change because the classroom is led by a man.

You have to be one of those that can take some of the base out of the voice, so you don't scare the kids. I mean be firm but you also have to remember to be soft and I think that's harder for us because we're raised that we have to be really hard and strong and tough in order to survive.

I think that black men have to delve into their feminine side and they don't want to, you know, they have to be strong, have to be seen as somebody to be feared and there's a difference between feared and being respected in [the] classroom.

I think African-American men in the teaching field have to have a bigger feminine side, that nurturing side. I think still among us, we more so than other races, feel that the whole...child rearing is like women's work.

The accumulation of the teachers’ statements describing the need to counter racial and gender beliefs show that African American male teachers carry burdens uncommon to most other teachers. In many recollections it was easy to understand how many black men can become so ingrained with societal messages that it’s easier to avoid a field wrought with them than it would be to divorce themselves from such thoughts to serve a higher purpose.

African American men are forced; they are pigeonholed into an idea of what they're supposed to be based on media and television and then our fathers tell us that we are supposed to be a strong people. My dad told me I was not supposed to cry.

Messages delivered by parents can be just as disparaging and harder to overcome as those delivered from anyone else.

My father didn't graduate from high school. He thought that it was acting white to actually pursue education. My mother always thought that if I pursued education I would get too intelligent to know how to deal in the white world.
It takes a great deal of character to disassociate with some of the existing beliefs that permeate African American culture and our society at large. Combine the need for that extent of character with the lure of other professions and its discernible why the number of black male teachers increases at such a lethargic pace. The participants were fully cognizant of their scarcity yet, no less dedicated to serving a higher purpose or duty.

They [children] have to be able to feel empathetically that you care about them and that's a skill that a lot of black man either don't have or don't want to work on in order to become a good teacher so they just stay away from the field.

They are fulfilling more roles than the immediate role of teacher. Black children express the need for men in their lives without disguise.

I've had kids that call me daddy. Because they feel that even the quote unquote bad kids they gravitate towards us because they feel that real, sincere love that were giving them. If we had more men in education, more black men in education, we could flip this on its head, so quickly.

You could be that black male father figure that a lot of young men didn't have. There a lot of lessons that you learned the hard way that you don't want another generation of kids especially black male kids to learn the hard way.

Anthony has a line from a favorite rap duo in mind related to a man’s obligation to children. “Like Pete Rock and CL Smooth [say], ‘it’s not the presents, it's the presence.’” Rudy’s statement below demonstrates dedication to service with a purpose. “I would do whatever I can to make this work. Serving that higher purpose even though you know it might not be rewarding, you know it's something that needs to be done.”

In respect to why the participants entered teaching the reasons they provided are similar to other teachers, regardless of race. The men in the study described their respect for the profession and delicate nature of students. “It's truly a craft and an art; it's
something that you have to really be dedicated to.” “We tend to have a social agenda
were not here to rescue kids; we're here to uplift kids.”

“African-American men in the teaching are driven by some deeper desire and
deeper obligation and duty to serve, and that’s something I've seen that's pretty consistent
and I wouldn’t limit that African-American men.”

Conclusion

This chapter introduced 4 themes which were derived by review and analysis of
interview responses provided by the study participants. The themes concentrated on the
educational and lived experiences from each of the subjects, in order to address the
purpose of this study; to identify their common factors that were influential in choosing
teaching as a career. The events, expectations, interventions from the participants lived
experiences were instrumental to the development of each participant’s character and
eventually to changing their reluctance to become teachers. The lessons from their
experiences have been used to form insights which will be detailed in the next chapter.

Based on the information shared in this and previous chapters, a number of
implications, conclusions and recommendations have been formed. The implications,
conclusions and recommendations from this study are intended to provide more
information to the existing body of research on African American men in the teaching
field that will be useful in addressing the problem; the dearth of African American men in
the field of education.
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The change in demography of our public school teacher population doesn’t come close to reflecting the diversity of the student nor overall population. As an important part of the diversity of America’s teachers, the number of African Americans entering the teaching field needs an upswing. This study seeks to address this issue by identifying the factors that influence African American men to enter the teaching field.

This chapter will review the purpose, significance and methodology of the study prior to presenting the implications of the study findings. This chapter will also provide a review of the findings in relation to extant literature related to the problem. Finally, I will share reflections on the study and suggest recommendations for further research on this subject.

As an African American man who has served in the field, this is an issue that became dear to me during my undergraduate studies; when I chose education as my major. When my education coursework started, I saw fewer and fewer black men during classes and especially during field experiences. Over the years, the deficit of black men took on more importance to me and it became my desire to address the issue through research. In addition to my experience in the field, the sense of urgency to improve the situation has grown because I now have three children, a daughter and twin boys, matriculating through the Clark County School District and charter schools. My family’s present and future may be affected by this phenomenon. I decided to approach this topic
for my study in hopes of uncovering new aspects to consider toward recruiting more African American men into the classroom.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that black men comprise only 2% of the nation’s public school classroom teachers. In 2012, the number of African American men teaching in the Clark County School District in Nevada is 226 or 1.3% of the 18,000 teachers in the district. The percentage drops to 1.1% when the teaching population of African American men is limited to classroom teachers, excluding strategists, counselors, facilitators and psychologists. These numbers represent a growing problem as the scarcity of black men teaching in America’s classrooms continues. Simultaneously, while the percentage of African American men remains at a dismal amount hovering at 2%, the percentage of African American students in public school classrooms increases, in part with our country’s student demographics, overall, which increasingly represent a pluralistic, multicultural and multiracial society.

Methodology Review

This study’s methodology is designed with a qualitative approach that consisted of in-depth interviews with a sample of 9 randomly selected African American men who were public school classroom teachers in Clark County, Nevada. Conducting the interviews was done through the lens of the Culturally Sensitive Research Framework developed by Linda Tillman. The study used research methods congruent with qualitative approaches to investigate and capture culturally specific knowledge from the study participants (Tillman, 2006). Their perspectives, experiences and outlook as African American men in the classroom were the aim of the study; to discern the factors
that influenced the participants to enter education. The goal of this study follows the theme of advocacy practice in educational qualitative research. Advocacy researchers see qualitative research as a civic responsibility, a “moral dialogue”, and as a means for bringing needed change to our society (Creswell, 2008). Culturally sensitive research approaches not only recognize race and ethnicity, but position culture as central to the research process (Tillman, 2006). Tillman’s component of culturally informed theory and practice holds that this research can lead to the generation of practices that are intended to address the culturally specific circumstances of the lives of African Americans.

Attention to validation was achieved through three primary strategies; triangulation and member checking (Creswell, 2008). The triangulation process reviewed data from existing literature, interviews and researcher notes. During the study a process of literature review was conducted to provide information related to the subject for the study. The information provided by the study participants through interviews was juxtaposed with the literature available and my own field notes and reflective journal. Participants were given the opportunity to review their interviews to report inaccuracies and/or provide additional comments or clarification. Trustworthiness for this study was also aided by the use of peer debriefing (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Review of data from available literature, participant interviews, peer review and researcher notes, led to the development of the themes and findings of the study.

Hermeneutic principals and taxonomic analysis of the participant interviews produced the themes of Reluctance, Expectations, Interventions & Events and Character. Taxonomies reveal subsets and the way they are related to the whole (Spradley, 1980).
Other important factors were deduced which were equally as important to identifying the factors that influenced the men into teaching. The input from participants’ mothers, teachers and mentors was emphasized in each of their lived experiences. These input variables were labeled as advisors. Their input was mentioned with such high frequency that it would be an understatement to say the participants would not be classroom teachers without the help of their advisors. The input from advisors had an effect on every theme generated from the study.

Findings and Reflections

Not one of the participants had education as their original major or career of choice. This observation is commensurate with the most prominent theme to develop; reluctance. Each of the participants was initially reluctant or unwilling to teach; each stated that in their youth they didn’t even consider teaching as a career choice. One said he would have laughed at you for even suggesting he would become a teacher. Another said “a 1,000 times” that there was no way he would ever become a teacher.

Three of the teachers only chose the path to teaching after leaving careers in other fields like the military and journalism. Between the three of them they averaged 6 years of non-education related professional job experience prior to choosing to enter education. In addition to the time spent in other fields, there was an average of three years of college teacher preparation before they started teaching. One participant chose to teach after completing a full career retirement of 26 years prior to entering the classroom.

Two became teachers through the Teach for America program. They both have aspirations in law; one to become an attorney and the other to become a judge. The
former is not enamored with the education field. He doesn’t plan to be in the field within a year. The aspiring judge has taken to the affect from teaching, his new found passion; so much so that he described being conflicted on whether to take a full scholarship to Cornell University or to continue teaching.

Three of the participants went directly from their undergraduate college experience into teaching; the only career they’ve known. One of these three completed his undergraduate degree in 4 years. Inclusion of the other two career teachers raises the average number of years for the trio to complete their degrees to nearly 10 years.

A third of the participants averaged 9 years in another career field before choosing the classroom. Another third of the participants changed universities, majors or both during their undergraduate studies and averaged nearly 10 years to complete their degrees. One completed an entire career prior to teaching. Two of the four participants who completed their degrees in 4 years are the Teach for America (TFA) alumnus. TFA teachers are only expected to fulfill a two year teaching contract. The average time it takes for African American men to earn a Bachelor’s degree is 6.3 years. The average for participants in this study is 6.4 years. For all of the participants, including the TFA teachers, the career choice of classroom teaching is a path that none of the participants seemed eager to take.

However, the good news is that once the participants entered the field they are here to stay. Jim Booker worked in the Air Force for 26 years and plans to teach for another two years which will give him a combined 36 years between his two careers. With the exception of Jim and Cameron, who is frustrated with education and eager to
become a lawyer, the other seven participants have pledged to teach or remain in education for years.

The participants’ reluctance to originally choose the teaching field is based on a number of reasons that are congruent with the extant research on why men, in general, avoid the classroom. Teachers have low salaries, it’s a female dominated profession, and the job requires feminine traits. Another reason is teachers don’t carry much prestige in our society.

The requisite for licensure for teach is a bachelor’s degree which is an attainment the majority of black men struggle with. The theme of Expectations highlights the impact of the people in roles that nurture personal development have in helping future teachers accomplish that ever important fete so they can eventually enter education. One third of the participants credited their moms with the most influence on their education through the attainment of their bachelor’s degree. These mothers expected their sons to achieve a higher education. Previous studies have found that a mother’s level of education is the number one indicator of a child’s educational achievement. Two of the three had mothers had earned a bachelor’s degree. Two of three also credited their mom for influencing them to become a teacher.

Three other participants attributed one or more of their teachers with ushering the participant into an educational renaissance and their teachers motivated the men to consider and eventually become teachers. Jim Booker gave credit to one of his high school teachers and his wife of 30 years for influencing him to become a teacher. Two participants, Kevin and Cameron, had the benefit of receiving influence from their
mothers, teachers and mentors to complete their degrees. While Kevin didn’t receive much support from his father, the expectation was voiced that all of the children in their household were expected to earn a college degree. Both of his parents have Bachelor’s degrees; the expectations from his parents combined with their example became a self-fulfilling prophecy for him to fulfill.

With the exception of Kevin, the other participants didn’t have any sense of legacy or certainty about a college education. At some point in their lives they were met with the expectation, or idea, that they had the potential to go to college and earn a degree. While the points varied in their lives when the participants encountered and embraced the expectation that they would achieve a higher education, the planting of the expectations and support they received was not accidental. The mothers, teachers and mentors were intentional in their actions when they interceded in the participants’ lives and encouraged them to raise their performance to meet their potential. This pattern reflects tenets of Jack Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory in that advisors recognized the students were in situations that fostered the opportunity for personal growth and change; the advisors provided input, support and some facilitated the change themselves.

The third theme from the participant interviews was Interventions and Events. Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997). The intervention efforts of advisors and the learning events that produced behavioral changes among the participants provided for developmental milestones which dually served as additional steps to becoming a teacher. Each participant had to make sense of their existence and direction they wanted for their lives.
The advisors’ interventions combined with the learning events presented challenges to the participants’ lives that cultivated what Mezirow describes as necessary processes for people to grow:

When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience. We transform our frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based. Educational interventions are necessary to ensure that the learner acquires the understandings, skills, and dispositions essential for transformative learning. The position here is that there is an inherent logic, ideal, and purpose in the process of transformative learning. The process involves transforming frames of reference through critical reflection of assumptions, validating contested beliefs through discourse, taking action on one’s reflective insight, and critically assessing it. (Mezirow, 1997)

Without the intervention of their advisors or experience from learning events the opportunities for personal growth may not have occurred. It was learned from the participants through their positive and negative experiences that their lives swayed in flux from their youth through their undergraduate experience. Yet, each participant identified one adult who played a pivotal role in their transforming their “frame of reference”. Only three participants identified more than one type of advisor as central to their transformative growth and ultimately becoming a teacher. Thus it is a finding for this study that parents, teachers and mentors must be cognizant of their influence on those children and students within their responsibilities.

The culmination of the guidance received by parents, teachers, mentors and lessons learned from life experiences fostered the character development of each of the participants in the study. It has been established by the comments from the participants and existing literature that men, in general, must be willing to disregard the false
perceptions held in our society that teaching is a feminine endeavor. The men in this study were shown to have the character to perform their jobs and simultaneously, with intention, dispel gender and racial stereotypes voiced from within and outside of their own gender and race. This intentional mission is summed up best in Jerry’s comment:

Black children need to see a black man in a different perspective. You need to change their perceptions. Some of the perceptions that people have of you, that they may have of African Americans and that you need to help affect that change but I think it's definitely much more effective if you start with children.

The participants’ collective stories described a variety of situations which required the disposition of character and restraint. There was the mention of racially charged comments from administrators and parents. Comments from family, friends and others, like, “I don’t know how you do it” and “teaching isn’t sexy”, don’t exactly help the participants, and teachers in general, hold the profession in high esteem. A regular test of character disclosed by the participants is the when single mothers are quite forward in their attempt to draw the men into sexual relationships. Anthony told the story of imploring a novice, 22 year old, black male teacher, to avoid the attempts of the high school girls who approach him with the least of concern about his career.

They're going to be trying to get at you [students and moms]; you are here to educate, stay focused…this is not about what you can do with these women, it's about what you can do with the mind to get these kids educated…be true to yourself and be true to these kids.

With so many perceptions to be aware of, so many potential pitfalls to navigate and avoid, so many relationships to cultivate, the participants described a constant state of vigilance and professional acuity. I interpreted this regular state of personal alert and professional self-evaluation as a heavy burden to bear; a burden heavier than most have
to bear and one that African American men in the teaching field must carry whether they are conscious of the challenges or not.

The themes, interpretations and findings that originated from this study are consistent with existent research on the experiences of African American men; while the amount of extant research on African American men in education is minimal. The men in this study are the reflection of their life experiences both in their youth and adulthood. The design of this study provided a vantage point to observe their lives in total.

The participants’ experiences reinforce prior research findings regarding the levels of African American men that attend college and subsiding percentages for those who attain a degree. The percentages decrease from 47% graduating from high school to 37% continuing on to attending college to 33% of those African American men earning their Bachelor’s degree (JBHE, 2003). The men in this study also reinforced the average number of years of college for black men to earn their degree; the national average is 6.3 years and average for the study participants was 6.4 years (Lee, 2011). The limited pipeline of African American male graduates had an understandable impact on the participants. They were affected by limited exposure to black men as teaching role models from their youth into their current experiences.

The majority of the participants were raised in dual parent households consisting of a mother and father. Four participants grew up in single parent homes. This statistic had little influence on the college completion rates for the participants. Of the 5 participants who completed their undergraduate degrees within less than 6 years, three
were raised in dual parent households while two were raised in single parent homes. The impact of other influences affected graduation rates.

The most important influences were those of participants’ mothers, teachers, mentors, alternate career influences and college academic support programs. Each of these influences provided transformative learning experiences for the participants. Teachers were mentioned as influences for all of the participants. For those with military experience the military also provided leadership and growth opportunities for two of the three study participants. I believe a factor in their development hinged on the fact that those two entered the military as officers. The participant who entered as a non-commissioned enlistee shared that he could have had a better career during his service but he was adamant that going into the military “was the best decision I’ve ever made”. The support from advisors, alternate career and college programs was part of the foundation for the participants teaching careers.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations which developed from the findings of this study are: the advisors roles in transformative learning experiences; emphasize teaching as a career early and repeatedly throughout the lives of young black men; debunk societal stereotypes of teachers and finally, give African American male teachers opportunities within academic settings to tell their experiences to young African American men.

We must understand who the important adults are in the lives of African American men and teach them, in conjunction with all teachers, the power of transformative learning experiences that they can architect within their access to the men
in their formative years. Let them create the learning environment opportunities and also encourage them to suggest to their students the thought of a teaching career.

Advisors should also be educated on the theory of Stereotype Threat. Just as transformative learning experiences can change the outlook of a learner, Stereotype Threat can effectively lead learners to follow a self-fulfilling prophecy that reinforces negative conceptualizations of the group to which they belong; in essence, Stereotype Threat can slow down or inhibit a learner’s achievement or destroy their desire to even try to perform.

Each of the participants could recall the specific individuals who either recommended the teaching field or demonstrated great teaching in their learning experience. Mothers and teachers should be encouraged to sing the praises of teaching as a rewarding and viable career. The participants who received the suggestions early may have been reluctant to enter the field but they eventually took that road. The power of suggestion may be able to turn the thought a teaching career into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Suggesting teaching as a profession to young African American men could be even more effective when the suggestions are made in tandem with providing current African American men in the field who debunk the stereotypes that exist about teachers in general. It would be an effective strategy to present black male teachers as masculine, fatherly, intelligent, strong and disciplined. Give them the opportunity to display their character and stories of resilience on a larger stage. African American men in the teaching field should become representatives of those in the field and share the positives
of a teaching career to students and the community as often as possible. This study has collected the supportive data to demonstrate that African American men can be drawn to the education field. Low teacher salary was included here within the stereotypes of teaching, even though it is a reality. It is included here because the pay is low but when you have hundreds of thousands of teachers subsisting on a teaching salary, teaching can’t be portrayed as though it’s not a sustainable profession. Thus, while low salaries are an identified detractor, I don’t believe teacher salaries deserve any further discussion as part of this study. The study has provided other findings that could bolster the recruitment of more black men to the field.

The study provided research that helped to dispel many perceptions about black men. The men in this study overcame obstacles that are often spoken of as insurmountable challenges; single parent households, mothers on welfare, stereotypes, racism, parents in prison, being poor, being an emancipated minor (on your own at 16), no means of paying for college, and black kids adopted by white parents. The men in this study easily represent the triumph described below from a meta-analysis in African American Males in School and Society.

We argue that at the core of African American males’ experience in school and society is persistence and triumph—one that has been overshadowed by the literature and discourse that focus primarily on the social pathology of African American men (Polite & Davis, 1999)

While the men in this study are examples of overcoming barriers, their stories provide insight on steps that can be taken to improve the education of black men in the future.
Federal, State and local governments will have to develop some effective recruitment programs to find the 80,000 black men that the Secretary of Education hopes to recruit. To increase recruitment I would recommend the creation of additional alternative routes to licensure. Jim, the ROTC teacher, outlined the benefits of creating a type of education program similar to the military G.I. Bill.

I think there has to be some type of incentive structure put in place to draw not just more African-Americans but more men into teaching and my opinion it needs to be done at the college level i.e. scholarships. I'll pay for you to do four years of...get a bachelors in education. The payback is that you give us five years of teaching, after that if you choose to change career fields you owe us nothing and that person leaves college with no debt.

His suggestion could work as an alternative route to licensure or for high school graduates who choose teaching as their route to college.

I think especially with a lot of I would say minority men who financially need that to go to college. I think that some of the ones who would not normally into education would take it because they see it as their ticket to number one get to college, to pay for college and then yes, you’ve gotta payback, but when you're doing the payback i.e. teaching for five years you're still getting paid so it's not as if your destitute and you don't have $60,000 worked school loans to pay off.

The existing research has shown that the majority of African Americans who attend college doesn’t complete their undergraduate degree. If a scholarship program could be created and offered to black men who’ve completed their undergraduate core classes but failed to attain a degree, this could create the incentive for them to go back and finish only with the caveat that the scholarship is conditional on becoming a teacher for a contracted period of time.

We are also overlooking a large pool of black men as potential teachers. African American men who have begun or earned a college degree but are ex-offenders could increase the pipeline of available teachers. With the clear limits to exclude any ex-
offenders convicted of crimes involving children, sexual crimes or domestic violence and any other crimes unrepresentative of a teacher’s ability to serve in loco parentis.

I would also recommend less concentration on getting more black men to enter undergraduate teacher education programs. Borrowing the idea from Teach for America with a slight twist, universities and school districts should recruit black men who have degrees in other fields that aren’t working in their chosen field and may be looking for another career. Provide the same type of training program over one summer and a term agreement.

This study has provided findings and implications that add to the discourse related to the issue of increasing the numbers of African American men who choose to become teachers. The recommendations were derived from the contributions of the study participants and my interpretations from their interviews. The thoughts shared by the participants and myself may provide policy makers, state and local school districts with previously unidentified factors that may guide more African American men to the field of education.

Further Study

The shared perceptions, experiences and outlooks of the nine men who participated in this study offered plenty of information and data to analyze and interpret. Their offerings spurned thoughts and concerns that can serve as topics for future study. None of the participants originally chose education as a career field. It would be of great interest to me to see a study of survey design to see if that would be the same finding for
African American men on a large scale and what would be the results for each subgroup of teachers.

I would like to know the percentage of how many teachers have a mother who has a Bachelor’s degree. This would be an extension of earlier studies that identified a mother’s education level as the number one influence on their child’s educational attainments (Benjamin, 1993).

Does the level of concern from men increase for children when they have fathered their own? A number of comments were made by the participants of their own origin and those they had heard from fathers seemed to indicate many men don’t become concerned about children and their development until they have their own.

**Researcher Reflections**

The role of black men in educating children has been an interest of mine since I was in high school. I was interested in why men were so seldom involved when I’d see young children in any activity, besides sports. I believe that may be part of the reason I took a fascination with early childhood education. After 15 years in the field, I had the opportunity to start a doctoral program in Educational Leadership and the issue still overwhelmed my thoughts. Now, more than three years in the child welfare arena, I’ve been able to conduct the first study of my own related to my combined interest.

When I contacted CCSD to complete their research study requirements I requested a list of all the African American male teachers within the CCSD. Once provided with the resulting list I realized there were some definitions that I should have articulated with the request. My definition of classroom teacher differed from the...
educational positions that were included on the provided list from CCSD. I was looking for classroom teachers; those responsible for daily classroom instruction. I did not specify whether to include counselors, psychologist and learning strategist. The original list I received contained 226 names. Once I applied my definition of classroom teachers, the number dropped just over 10% to 202 teachers. The randomly selected participants were identified from the reduced list of 202 teachers.

As an indigenous-insider I thought I would be welcomed by all of the participants and they would be open to my inquiries as a researcher. I believe the charter school teachers were worry-free about the direction of the interviews because they were referred to me by someone they either knew or respected. On the contrary, I sensed apprehension on the part of a couple of CCSD teachers. To them, I was a stranger, intruding on their familiar ground asking them to share experiences that were sensitive and even revealing. I felt their apprehension at the beginning of their interviews as they provided calculated answers that allowed them to maintain an imaginary barrier to accessing their fully open and honest reactions to questions. As the interview progressed for each apprehensive participant their answers became more expressive, detailed and less guarded. I watched them loosen up as we advanced through the interviews. If I had to do it again, I would gain the names of potential participants through official protocols but I would find a way to infuse network sampling so participants feel as though they had been recommended for the research. Just as with the charter school participants the initial apprehension would be avoided.

After the first interview I realized a number of similarities between his experiences and my own. As the similarities grew with each interview I recognized I had
to limit probing questions to gather information directly related to the study. I wanted to ask so much more about the participants’ life stories. I also became cognizant of my own bias that could leak into the study, so I consciously restrained as much bias as possible during the analysis and interpretation of the interviews. I decided as often as it was feasible I would use the participants’ exact words.

One lesson that didn’t become apparent until I began analysis of the data was the order of the interview protocol. The order made sense during the interviews but during analysis I saw that the questions didn’t make senses chronologically in the lives of the participants. The question that asked if they’d worked in other fields should have been placed in the group of questions about their background. The inquiry into their motivation to teach should have been asked before asking if they took an alternate route to licensure. For those who did an ARL, the continuity of the interview was disjointed.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences and perspectives of African American men serving as classroom teachers to identify common factors that may influence African American men, in general, to enter the teaching field. The commonalities among them were the influences from advisors; mothers, teachers and mentors. The themes from their lived experiences were: their long-standing reluctance to consider education; all of the participants had expectations from others to achieve a higher education; all of the participants experienced interventions and events that prepared or led them toward education; and all displayed the character to overcome stereotypes and other barriers that dissuade men from teaching.
There were 5 recommendations from the study. 1) Identify the advisors and ensure they fulfill their roles in transformative learning experiences. 2) Emphasize teaching as a career early and repeatedly throughout the lives of young black men. 3) Debunk societal stereotypes of teachers. 4) Give African American male teachers opportunities within academic settings to tell their experiences to young African American men. Promote to the public the stories of African American men who teach, especially those who overcame dramatic challenges. 5) Recommendations included creating a variety of alternative route to licensure programs.

From a personal perspective I see a dire need to get more black men to become teachers and just like the men in this study who overcame their reluctance, I believe those who make the decision to become teachers will wish they had made the decision earlier.
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMED CONSENT
Department of Educational Leadership

TITLE OF STUDY: Antecedent Influences: Factors That Guide African American Men to the Field of Education

INVESTIGATOR(S): Michael Maxwell

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 702-501-3149

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to identify common factors shared by the study participants that were influential in choosing teaching as a career. This qualitative study utilizing semi-structured interviews will be guided by the following questions: (1) What life experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession? (2) What educational experiences influence African American men to enter the teaching profession? (3) Once in the profession, what are the lived experiences of African American male teachers?

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit these criteria: you are a self-described African American man who currently is a public school classroom teacher in Clark County, Nevada.

Procedures

As a volunteer participant in this study, you will be asked to: 1) participate in a semi-structured digitally audio recorded interview of approximately 60 to 90 minutes; 2) review interview transcripts for accuracy and verify authenticity to the researcher; 3) provide the researcher with descriptions of your standpoint, experiences and perspectives as an African American man serving as a classroom teacher.
**Benefits of Participation**
This study may not provide any direct benefits to you. However, it is desired that your interview will contribute to research that provides findings which lead to the increased recruitment of African American men to teaching.

**Risks of Participation**
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. The risk to participants is minimal as you will participate in a digitally audio recorded interview. You will receive a copy of the interview protocol in advance of the interview. Due to the relatively small number of participants in this study, there may be risk that some of the questions could make participants indirectly identifiable. Fictitious names and/or alphanumeric references will be created for all participants and/or schools in order to protect your privacy. The interview will be conducted in a location that is private, comfortable room or office within your school work site or alternate location of your choosing. You may terminate the interview without penalty at any time. You will have the opportunity to review the interview transcript for accuracy, make any revisions or modifications you deem necessary, and return the verified transcript to the researcher.

**Cost /Compensation**
There will be no financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take from 60 to 90 minutes of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

**Contact Information**
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Michael Maxwell at 501-3149. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794 or toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.

**Voluntary Participation**
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.
Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be destroyed.

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_________________________________________  _______________
Signature of Participant                  Date

_________________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)

I agree to be audio taped for the purpose of this research study:

_________________________________________  _______________
Signature of Participant                  Date

_________________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)
APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
ANTECEDENT INFLUENCES: FACTORS THAT GUIDE AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN TO THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Interview Protocol

Background Information

1. Where are you from?
2. Describe your family structure during your childhood; two or single parent, foster, siblings…?
3. How would you describe your family’s income during your childhood?

Education

4. What was your 9-16 educational experience like?
5. What college(s) did you attend?
6. How many years did it take to earn your bachelor’s degree? If applicable, how many years did it take to earn your Master’s degree? If applicable, how many years did it take to earn your Doctoral degree?
7. What familial, social and academic supports did you have while completing your educational attainments; undergraduate and if applicable, graduate school?
8. If you took an alternative route to licensure, what supports did you have while attaining your license?

Professional Background, Experiences and Perspectives

9. Have you worked in other fields besides education; if so, what field(s); how long?
10. What motivated and influenced you to become a classroom teacher?
11. What characterizes African American men in the teaching field from African American men in other professions?

12. How do your perspectives, experiences and outlook as an African American influence your professional interactions in the classroom?

13. Have you recruited other African American men to teaching careers?

14. Why do you think there are few black men as teachers?

15. How do you think more black men could be recruited to teaching careers?

16. How long do you plan on being a classroom teacher?

17. For what reasons might you leave the teaching profession?

18. What advice would you give to a newly recruited black male teacher?
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