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DISAPPEARING ACTS: THE DECLINING NUMBERS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTINGS

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DISAPPEARING ACTS: THE DECLINING NUMBERS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTINGS

By

Catherine Frances Lewis-Brownfield

A Dissertation Submitted to the

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2022

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TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTINGS

By

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my late grandmother Frances Huggins. Thank you for all the love and devotion you poured into my mother, Joyce Huggins, and her siblings. Your desire for a better life gave birth to me being able to soar with the eagles, and I know I stand on the shoulders of giants. You ensured that the pain and obstacles you encountered would not be my stumbling blocks, and I am eternally grateful.

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DISAPPEARING ACTS: THE DECLINING NUMBERS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL SETTINGS

Abstract

By Catherine Frances Lewis

University of the Pacific
2022

African American teachers are slowly leaving the classroom, causing an imbalance in the student/teacher ratio (NCES, 2022). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, African American teachers make up 3% in California and 7% nationally. This study sought to understand the reasons for the decline in the number of African American teachers in public school settings. Due to the decline in their numbers, African American students have suffered high dropout rates, low standardized test scores, and low college attendance (Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017). This qualitative study examined the obstacles current African American teachers face and the celebrations that sustain them. This study also sought participant input on future recruitment, support, and retention of African American teachers. Purposive sampling was used to understand the phenomena African American teachers encounter while working in public school settings (Creswell, 2012). Prerequisites included self-identification as African-American/Black, teaching in grades K-12, and two years of public school experience. Participants who did not meet all three criteria were disqualified. The results showed that districts need to increase pay to attract more African American teachers. In addition, to pay increases, participants identified obstacles such as placement in high-needs schools and experiencing a lack of respect from parents and peers. The love of students and being the change African American students deserve were identified as motivating sustainers.

The findings from this study may help teacher preparation programs, districts, and administrators nationwide recruit more African American teachers. It may also influence the creation of affinity programs for recruiting, supporting, and retaining African-American teachers.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

African-American teachers are slowly departing from the field of education (Griffin &

Tackie, 2017). Their slow withdrawal has had profound impacts on the student communities

they once served. In the wake of their exit, some African-American students have experienced

profound disparities in the area of academics, discipline, and the pursuit of higher education

(Griffin & Tackie, 2017). Districts have made minimal success in successfully recruiting and

retaining African-American teachers, which has yielded limited changes in the teaching

workforce (Barnum, 2018).

To fully understand the significance of the interdependence of African-American students

and African-American teachers, it is important to look at the post-civil war era of the southern

United States (also referred to as the South). Historically, the South was known as "the reservoir

of African-American culture" (Morris & Monroe, 2009, p. 1). The U.S. South renders the

critical understanding of the identity and schooling experiences of African Americans (Morris &

Monroe, 2009). At the end of the U.S. Civil War, 90% of African Americans lived in the South

and scores of African-American teachers were needed and these teachers were responsible for

the educational advancement of African-American students (Madkins, 2011). After 1868, state

governments and northern benevolent societies supplied the majority of the financing for black

education, but the initiative was frequently taken by blacks themselves, who acquired property

and constructed buildings and raised money to pay teachers (Digital History, 2003). The demand

for teachers was met through the recruitment of candidates from teacher colleges at Black

universities (Anderson, 1988). During the period of segregation, teachers were inspired with the

notion that it was their responsibility to the African-American community to shape and uplift the minds of African-American students (Morris, 2004).

Teaching was often a multigenerational tradition and highly respected in the African-American community (Madkins, 2011). During the era of segregated schooling, African-American teachers taught in dilapidated facilities with minimal resources (Madkins, 2011). Despite unequal pay and inequalities, these teachers were determined in their resolve to provide students with the tools to advance themselves and their race (Siddle Walker, 2000). Prior to integration, African-American students did well in school, due to the large number of African-American teachers in American classrooms (Sealey-Ruiz & Lewis, 2003).

Since the groundbreaking case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the field of education has experienced a mass exodus of African-American teachers (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014). Although African Americans at the time considered the U.S. Supreme Court decision to end segregated schooling a victory, they never fathomed how the ruling would increase the attrition of African-American teachers then and now (Madkins, 2011; Milner, 2008). Prior to 1954, around 82,000 African-American teachers were in charge of two million African-American students (Hudson & Holmes, 1994). Between 1954 and 1965, over 38,000 African-American teachers and administrators in the South and bordering states lost their jobs as a result of discriminatory practices in desegregated public schools (Green, 2004). In 1978, African-American teachers comprised only 12% of teachers nationally and the numbers continued to decline (Madkins, 2011).

Diversity in the teacher workforce is important and the disparity between African-American students and African-American teachers is problematic because these students do not see themselves reflected in the classroom (Madkins, 2011). Researchers such as Gershenson et

al. (2017) found African-American teachers have been identified as a crucial part of the learning experiences, academics, and professional aspirations of African-American students. Many African-American teachers possess the skill of being warm demanders. Warm demanders are defined as teachers that set high expectations for their pupils, persuade them of their own genius, and guide them toward fulfilling their potential in an organized, disciplined atmosphere (Safir, 2021). Not only are African-American teachers essential for the academic development of students, but they also act as a bridge for staff, providing cultural awareness and best practices for working with African-American students and parents (Griffin & Tackie, 2017).

Gershenson et al. (2017) examined the long-term effects of same-race teachers on educational outcomes of students of the same race. The authors analyzed the dynamics of the relationship between African-American teachers and African-American students. Gershenson et al. revealed that African-American students who had at least one African-American teacher during their elementary years were more likely to graduate from high school and aspire to go to college. Same race teachers also have a profound impact on students coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, not only impacting graduation rates but also changing the trajectory of their lives. African-American students from low socioeconomic backgrounds exposed to African-American teachers during their elementary years are 29% less likely to drop out of school, and the probability for boys decreased to 39%, making them less likely to enter the school to prison pipeline (Gershenson et al., 2017).

The critical role that African-American teachers play in the lives of African-American students made a dramatic impact on their academic progress and well-being (Milner, 2008). Among students of color, African-American students have experienced continuous inequalities in academic achievement in comparison to students from other ethnic

groups. Education scholars have noted that limited academic progress has been made by African-American students in public schools since 1954 (Sealey-Ruiz & Lewis, 2003). Since that time, African-American students have experienced academic deficits that have cast a negative shadow on America's public school systems.

The special tie that African-American teachers and students have not only enhances educational achievements for African-American children, but also benefits them in a variety of ways such as emotionally and culturally (Watson & Woods, 2011). The loss of African-American teachers has hurt the quality of education African-American students receive (Sealey-Ruiz & Lewis, 2003). Since their departure, African-American students have experienced racial disparities in their academic environments, such as higher suspension and expulsion rates (Cheng, 2017). African-American students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Many researchers believe this could be caused by the racial imbalance between teachers and students.

The disproportionate numbers of African-American teachers in the field of education continue to decline (Madkins, 2011). According to a 2019 report by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), in 2018-2019, there were approximately 3.7 million public school teachers in the United States. In 2017, the NCES reported that African-American teachers only represented 7% of the teaching workforce in the United States, while African-American students made up 15% of all students in the American public school system. In 2018-2019, approximately 72% of elementary and secondary students were students of color. According to the NCES, White teachers account for 80% of the teaching force. Looking at diverse states such as California, the teacher/pupil racial statistics paint a grim but realistic picture of the lack of diversity within the U.S. teaching workforce.

The State of California is known for its diversity and socio-cultural trends, but its teacher workforce is not reflective of the diversity of its students. According to the California Board of Education, African-American teachers account for 4% of the teaching population in California's workforce. In 2019, California's public school K-12 student enrollment was 6,186,278 (CDE, 2019). During the 2018-2019 school year, minority students accounted for 75% of the student population in California. The data is relevant due to the student racial demographics of California Students. The racial/ethnic breakdown was as follows: 5.04% of the students were African-American, 0.50% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 9.30% Asian, 2.40% Filipino, 54.60% Hispanic or Latino, 0.40% Pacific Islander, 22.90% White, Two or More Races not Hispanic 3.60% and 0.90% not reported. In the 2017-2018 school year, there were a total of 306,261 teachers working in public schools, of those identified by specific race or ethnicity, 113,384 identified as teachers of color. Looking at the overall demographics of African-American students (334,652) versus African-American teachers (11,918), there is a distinguishable difference between the student population and teacher workforce (*EdData - Home Page*, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

In the United States, the diversity of the student population is not mirrored by the teaching population. Similar demographic trends hold in the pupil/teacher ratios in California. The racial disparities that many African-American students experience is a direct result of the declining rates of African-American teachers, causing a mismatch between teacher and pupil (Cheng, 2017). These students depend on African-American teachers not only for academic inspiration but also to assist in the advancement of their emotional, social, and psychological development (Cheng, 2017). The stagnate academic growth, as well as an

increase in discipline, reflects a disconnect that this population of students feels (Brady, Cohen, Jarvis, & Walton, 2020). Improving the academic achievement and wellbeing of African-American students could hinge on the ability to increase the numbers of African-American teachers entering and staying in the teaching field.

The U.S. Department of Education (2017) identified several points from which teachers of color could exit the teacher pipeline; postsecondary enrollment, enrollment in education programs, postsecondary completion, entering the workforce, and teacher retention. Within these points lie several factors that may negatively impact prospective teachers such as insufficient preparation for success in postsecondary programs, standardized testing, financial barriers, a lack of diversity in the pedagogy implemented in teacher preparation programs (TPPs), and discrimination (Madkins, 2011). This study looked at the factors that impact the identified points within the teacher pipeline that have resulted in the decline of the academic achievement of African-American students.

The Teacher Shortage in California

The teacher shortage in California, as in other parts of the nation, has reached all-time highs (Hong, 2022). A recent report suggested that the teaching supply is not adequate to meet the growing demand (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teacher shortages are widespread and are promising to persist. California districts reported 80% of shortages of qualified teachers; of those districts reporting shortages, 90% of them felt the shortage was worse than previous years (Sutcher, Carver-Thomas, & Darling-Hammond, 2018). Many districts are struggling to find qualified teachers, which has led to the hiring of underprepared teachers. Over 5,000 teachers taught with short term staff permits and provisional internship permits, and there has been a dramatic increase in the number issued in the last five years (Freedberg, 2019). These

permits can be issued to meet the demands of acute staffing needs. However, no teaching

training is needed, just an undergraduate degree, and the California Basic Educational Skills Test

(CBEST) is required to meet issuance requirements (California Department of Education,

2019). Although teachers with less than full credentials account for less than 5% of the 306,000

teachers in California's classrooms, the number is increasing (Freedberg, 2019). In addition,

Underprepared teachers are more likely to work in high needs schools (Sutcher et al., 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research was to identify the factors that contributed to the

continuous decline in the number of African-American teachers in today's public school systems.

To describe, explain, and comprehend the phenomena seen by African-American teachers, the

qualitative method was used (Merriam, 1998). The phenomenon was defined in this research as

the obstacles and motivating experiences encountered by African-American teachers that

influenced their desire to enter and/or continue in the teaching profession.

Research Questions

The following questions acted as a springboard to delve deeper into the issues or

experiences that drive the decline of African-American teachers:

RSQ 1. What obstacles have African-American teachers encountered that have impacted
their desire to enter, remain or leave the teaching profession?

RSQ 2. What motivates African-American teachers to remain in the teaching profession?

RSQ 3. What do current African-American teachers think will increase the number of
African-American teachers entering the field?

Significance of the Study

As the teacher shortage persists, the impact on student outcomes continues to be a point

of contention in urban districts. Shernoff et al. (2011) cited that urban school districts with high

percentages of students of color are successful in hiring new teachers, but the teachers are often unprepared and inexperienced and exit the profession within the first five years. Although some students are unaffected or perhaps have had access to highly qualified teachers, students of color continue to lack quality representation in the classroom. Among the district teacher shortages, the rate of African-American recruitment and retention continues to dwindle. Hopefully this study will illuminate ways to decrease the effects of the identified factors for African-American teachers in the teacher profession or entering the teaching pipeline. Their experiences may inform practices for the recruitment, support, and retention of African-American teachers. The results from this study might also assist districts in California and all districts to become more deliberate in their recruitment practices of these "Warm Demanders," and it may also influence the creation of programs exclusively designed for the recruitment, support, and retention of African-American teachers.

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) will frame this study. CRT was birthed from the social missions and struggle of the 1960s in response to the retrenching of the civil rights gains and the transformation of the social dialog in politics (Tate, 1997). Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman developed CRT in the 1970s; its formation came from a need to abandon the common practice of critical legal studies (CLS) (Ladson-Billings, 2005). CLS failed to address the experiences of African-American people (Ladson-Billings, 2005). CRT is based on the premise that racism is a social construct used to perpetuate social justice for the purpose of using storytelling to offset Eurocentric beliefs. In essence, a Eurocentric belief system implies that European American culture is the norm and should be used to critique other cultures (IResearchNet, 2016).

There are four components to CRT: counter-story telling, the performance of racism, whiteness as property, and interest convergence. Utilizing counter-storytelling, the researcher will employ CRT to give voice to the narratives of African-American teachers. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined counter-storytelling "a method of telling stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 32). The shared stories of African-American teachers can lead to understanding of their continued declining numbers. Their collective experiences could inform current programs on better practices to recruit, support, and retain African-American teachers. The presence of African-American teachers is critical in the improvement of the academic performance of African-American students. The framework and its applications will be described in more detail in Chapter 2.

Description of the Study

For this study, the researcher employed qualitative methods to determine what was behind the declining numbers of African American teachers by exploring the obstacles and motivations they encountered that impacted their desire to enter and stay in public school settings. The qualitative approach gives voice to the lived experiences of African-American teachers as a means of better understanding the context behind the decline. Interviews were used as the primary tool for inquiry. Participants participated in two separate interviews and the researcher analyzed the transcripts to identify patterns and themes. Their experiences may inform current TPPs and or the creation of programs created for the exclusive recruitment, development, support, and retention of African-American teachers. More detail of the methodology will be explored in Chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

For this study, the specific terms used in this research are defined in this section.

Attrition. The action or process of teachers gradually leave the profession due to sustained pressure.

Black. Individuals of African descent. The term may be used interchangeably with African Americans.

Cultural capital. Social assets of a person that promotes social mobility (Franklin, 2002).

Pedagogy. The method or the practice of teaching.

Teaching pipeline. Sequence of steps taken to become a teacher.

Racism. Racial prejudice supported by institutional power, used to the advantage of one race at the disadvantage of another race (Banaji, Fiske, & Massey, 2021).

Retention. Teachers that remain in the district or profession.

Segregation. To divide according to race or ethnicity.

Social capital. A social network of relationships that provides benefits.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a historical perspective that drastically altered the numbers of African-American teachers in the workforce. Their exodus has altered the landscape of teaching and has caused profound academic disadvantages for African-American students. As the teacher shortage continues, African-American teachers represent 4% of the teaching workforce in California and 7% nationally (USAFacts, 2020). Districts have worked to recruit teachers of color but fail to retain them. The Department of Education identified several areas in which teachers of color could exit the teacher pipeline; postsecondary enrollment, enrollment in education programs, postsecondary completion, and entering the workforce. Within these points lie several factors that negatively affect prospective teachers, such as lack of preparedness for

postsecondary programs, standardized tests, financial barriers, and lack of diversity in the pedagogy implemented in TPPs. Chapter 2 will be a literature review of historical and current legislation that has contributed to the declining numbers of African-American teachers, factors that negatively impact current and prospective African-American teachers, and current recruitment programs focused on African Americans.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this qualitative research was to identify the factors that contributed to the continuous decline in the number of African-American teachers in today's public school systems. To describe, explain, and comprehend the phenomena seen by African-American teachers, the qualitative method was used (Merriam, 1998). This chapter is an analytical investigation of peer-reviewed research articles, and other scholarly works, concerning the declining numbers of African-American teachers, particularly the roadblocks that impacted their desire to stay in the teaching profession. The researcher sought to explore how the experiences of African-American teachers from the past and present could potentially change how African-American teachers are recruited, supported, and retained in the future.

Overview of the Chapter

This literature review will explore what is behind the continued declining numbers of African-American teachers. The literature review is divided into three sections. First the background of African-American teachers will be explored. Next will come a historical perspective and current legislation contributing to the declining numbers of African-American teachers. Chapter 2 will also explore factors that negatively impact prospective and current African-American teachers. The chapter concludes with an investigation of current programs in California created for the exclusive recruitment, support, and retention of African-American teachers.

Historical Perspective and Current Legislation

This section focuses on how the past has fundamentally impacted the number of African-American teachers currently teaching in public school settings and academic outcomes for

African-American students. The failure of state and federal officials to provide adequate funding to low socioeconomic communities that largely serve African-American students is not a new phenomenon (Darling-Hammond, 1998). At the end of the Civil War and until the court ruling of Brown v. Board of Education, white legislatures in the South and the North did not utilize public funds to ensure equalization of funding for African-American and White public schools (Franklin, 2002). In today's school systems that serve students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, current legislation focuses on a top-down system of education accountability, privatization, and "schools of choice," negatively impacting African-American teachers and students (Lipman, 2015).

Historical Perspective: Reconstruction Period in the South

The literature regarding newly freed slaves during and beyond the Reconstruction period revealed that African-Americans' appreciation for education and literacy began before the Reconstruction period. According to Franklin (2002), African Americans understood knowledge is power and worked diligently to provide and support education through schooling for themselves and their children. Span (2002) documented in his essay "I Must Learn Now or Not at All," African Americans who endeavored to establish schools and other places of higher learning. African Americans used what resources they had to open schools, and many of them would pay as much as a dollar a month for their children's education (Franklin, 2002).

During 1861-1871, public schools were a new development for African Americans and White students (Danns, Purdy, & Span, 2015). The Freedmen's Bureau opened 1,000 schools across the South for Black children after the Civil War, and by 1865 over 90,000 African-American students were enrolled as students in public schools (Hill-Jackson, 2017). Understanding the intricate ties education had to their freedom, African Americans from

the South preferred Northern teachers because they appeared to be enthusiastic about teaching

African Americans (Fairclough, 2001). Unfortunately, many Northern teachers thought that

African Americans were mentally inferior to Whites. Public schools were known as common

schools and were funded by property taxes; African-American communities were overtaxed,

paying more than double of what they were receiving in state and local funding (Franklin,

2002). Common school gaining popularity in the North during the Antebellum era (1836-1860),

the education for African-American students was separate and inequitably funded. Public

"common schools" in the North as well as in the South were segregated for African-American

and White students, resulting in African-American students receiving inadequate resources and

often learning in dilapidated facilities (Madkins, 2011).

Despite the unjust conditions of public education, African-American teachers played a

vital role in the academic success of African-American students. Understanding the importance

of cultural capital, African-American teachers worked to give their time and energy to their

students because they knew it was essential for the advancement of the group (Franklin,

2002). Danns et al. (2015) observed that it was a feeling of community that aided them in

overcoming economic difficulties, developing traditions and ceremonies, and confronting

obstacles.

Despite the poor working conditions and unequal pay, African-American teachers

considered themselves leaders in their communities and committed themselves to black public

education, willing to be accountable to the parents and their communities (Franklin,

2002). These teachers were role models to their students and taught them how to navigate a

world that was filled with many racial inequalities (Madkins, 2011). DuBois (1935) believed

that negro teachers possessed a sympathetic touch due to their understanding of their students'

history, culture, and background.

Brown v. Board of Education

The Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation violated the 14ᵗʰ Amendment. Brown v.

Board of Education was the culmination of years of litigation strategically planned by the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP; Columbus State Library,

2019). The plan was inspired by unfair accommodations given to African Americans regarding

education, housing, public facilities, and transportation resulting from the Plessy v. Ferguson

ruling in 1896 (Green, 2004). The Plessy decision allowed segregation on the premise that social

equality and racial impartiality was not the concern of the court (Green, 2004). As a result, the

separate but equal was adopted.

Thurgood Marshall argued Brown v. Board of Education in defense of seven parents

whose children were denied access to an all-White school in Topeka, Kansas. Social scientists

and psychologists argued that Due to the growing psychological and emotional constraints

imposed by separated facilities, Black students in segregated schools were unable to study as

successfully as White students (Green, 2004). As a result, the Supreme Court found legal

segregation created first- and second-class citizens and had adverse effects on the identity and

psychological development of African-American children (Danns et al., 2015). However, racial

segregation continued for 20 years after the initial ruling in 1954. The Civil Rights Act of 1964

mandated the elimination of federal funds to school districts that did not conform to

desegregation guidelines (National Archives, 2022).

As a result of the Civil Rights Act, by 1967, there was a narrow margin between North

and South, and the average percentage of African-American students in elementary schools was

between 30% and 36% (Danns et al., 2015). Unfortunately, the transition for African-American faculty and staff was not as promising in the North. In the South, the percentage of African-American instructional staff almost mirrored their student population at 32 (staff) and 36 (students), both exceeding the 26% average (Danns et al., 2015). In the North, there were disparities, rendering percentages of 16 (staff) and 30 (students), which is lower than the population percentage of 18% (Danns et al., 2015).

Exploring historical literature regarding the Reconstruction period reveals that African Americans have a time-honored practice of distinction in education, for over 100 years, teaching was a prestigious occupation in African-American communities (Smith, 1989). Generations of African-American teachers who taught in segregated schools inspired multitudes of students that went into various careers and professions Green, 2004). For the most part, African-American teachers knew their work in segregated schools was necessary and regarded themselves as individually and collectively responsible for the success of African-American students (Smith, 1989). African-American teachers used cultural capital to support the process (Danns et al., 2015). African-American teachers' dedication and devotion to African-American students gave birth to the present generation of African-American engineers, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals (Dilworth, as cited in Green, 2004).

The backlash of Brown v. Board of Education. The Brown ruling changed the future for African-American teachers and students. Many African-Americans believed that the desegregation of public schools would provide better educational opportunities for African-American students (Green, 2004). The unanticipated effects of the verdict caused catastrophic damage to African-American children and teachers (Wilkins, 1996). W. E. B DuBois believed that if desegregation occurred and negro students were integrated into public schools, unforeseen

circumstances would ultimately impact the number of negro teachers, possibly causing them to diminish or ultimately disappear (DuBois, 1935). Unfortunately, his prediction came true, and tens of thousands of teachers lost their jobs as a result of the ruling (Madkins, 2011). Between 1954 and 1965, 39,000 African-American teachers from 17 states lost their jobs (Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Madkins, 2011). The closure of African-American schools led to the systematic elimination of African-American teachers, administrators, and staff (Green, 2004). Those who maintained their jobs experienced internal segregation, only able to educate African-American students; while their White counterparts taught White students (Madkins, 2011). The loss of African-American teachers had a negative effect on the quality of education African-American children receive in public schools (Sealey-Ruiz & Lewis, 2003). Since 1954, African-American students have thus not experienced widespread educational success (Sealey-Ruiz & Lewis, 2003).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top

With the release of the *A Nation at Risk* report in 1983, which President Reagan commissioned, there has been a traumatic shift in education policy from a focus on equity to financial competitiveness, markets, standards, and top-down accountability (Pierpoint-Gardner, 1983). The report laid out the devastating realities of education in America, and faulted the public-school system for America's diminishing economy. To regain economic dominance, the authors argued that it was imperative that a top-down system of education accountability was employed, higher standards for course-taking, and tying teacher salaries to student performance. Since the report's release, presidents such as Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have encoded it into their education platforms (Lipman, 2015).

George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) included accountability frameworks for states, school districts, and schools receiving federal education funds, these frameworks included high-stakes testing, privatization, and "school of choice" (Lipman, 2015). The law also required states to identify schools not reaching the mark and either devise a turnaround plan or close them (Lohman, 2010). The implementation of high-stakes testing and teacher accountability leads to teacher stress, which weakens teacher morale (Valli & Buese, 2007).

After the election of President Obama, many hoped he would not adopt the neoliberal agenda that was set forth by the release of the National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983 report but take a more equitable stand to reform education. Following the lead of presidents before him, Obama included federal education funding programs, competitive grants as well as new initiatives (Lipman, 2015). Much like his predecessors, Obama's education platform was built upon familiar themes: markets, privatization, top-down accountability, and competitive allocation of resources.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 was designed to stimulate job creation during difficult economic times by reducing taxes and spending hundreds of billions of dollars in essential industries like energy, health care, infrastructure, and education over the next two years (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Following the ARRA, President Obama introduced his education policy, Race to the Top (RTTT), which was created as a pilot program to encourage deregulation as well as to encourage collaboration among business leaders, educators, and other stakeholders (Howell, 2015). As part of a stimulus act, Congress provided $4.35 billion to the competitive RTTT grant program. The grant challenged states to come up with reformative and innovative ways to bring about change in the following areas: (1) enhance standards and assessments; (2) improve the way data is used and collected; (3) increase

teacher effectiveness and equity in teacher distribution; and (4) turn around low achieving

schools (Lohman, 2010).

RTTT involved three phases, and both phase one and two included certain education-

policy that each applicant would be evaluated on. States were required to share their future

aspirations for meeting the criteria in each of the categories. The categories and point value are:

state success factors (125), standards and assessments (70), data systems to support instruction

(47), great teachers and leaders (138), turning around the lowest-performing schools (50),

(general) high performing charter schools, (50) and competitive preference priority (15) (Howell,

2015). The greatest point value focused on great teachers and leaders; the quality of the

educators is essential to the education of students. The Obama administration wanted to ensure

that states were providing high quality pathways for future teachers and principals (Howell,

2015). Another important element written in the criteria of the great teachers and leaders'

category was for states to identify alternative routes to certification in order to remove barriers to

teaching for potentially strong teachers who might be impeded by existing systems or processes

(Weiss & Kiel, 2013). In a speech given by the Secretary of Education to the National Education

Association, Arne Duncan said, "Our challenge is to make sure every child in America is

learning from an effective teacher no matter what it takes" (Arce-Trigatti & Anderson, 2018).

The ARRA saved and created over 400,000 jobs, mostly with the field of education,

saving scores of teachers, administrators, and librarians from potential layoffs (White House

Office of the Press Secretary, 2016). Corporations such as The Gates Foundation led by former

Microsoft CEO Bill Gates, have invested $200 million to develop Common Core, while other

conglomerates such as Pearson is the global brand known for their education testing products for

teachers and students (Lipman, 2015). With the push for high stakes testing, many feared that Pearson could control every aspect of the education system (Ravitch & Mathis, 2010).

Contributing Factors to the Declining Numbers of African-American Teachers

This section seeks to examine the literature to identify various barriers that have contributed to the declining numbers of African-American teachers. Through literature these factors have been identified as lack of preparedness for postsecondary programs, standardized tests, and other barriers associated with working in a predominantly White profession. Unfortunately, many African-American students are not prepared for postsecondary programs, which may impact their ability to succeed.

Lack of Preparedness for Postsecondary Programs

Sadly, African-American students fail to receive the support needed to reach their full potential and many graduate from high school lacking the academic rigor needed to be successful in college (Bryant, 2015). Ahmad and Boser (2014), found that student performance on college entrance exams, such as the SAT or ACT, can provide some insight on college preparedness as well as to be an indicator for the teacher pipeline. Performance on these tests can be limited due to poor academic preparation, which is a growing problem. High performing students of color suffer from a lack of guidance and support, including encouragement to take more rigorous courses (Bryant, 2015). African-American students from high poverty schools are the least likely to be prepared (Bryant, 2015). Stewart, Stewart, and Simons (2007) attributed lack of academic achievement to environmental and cultural differences but deficiencies and disparities within school systems are equally to blame.

Researchers have found that a key contributor to low postsecondary attendance for students of color is financial hardships and have reported that students who do attend often work

more and take fewer classes (Carver-Thomas, 2017). In 2011, students of color pursued careers in education at a greater rate, but their enrollment in postsecondary institutions was extremely low; the overall number of African-American college students majoring in education was 7% (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data from Cohort 2010 for four-year postsecondary institutions show that 40% of African-American students graduate from college within six years; 34% of the graduates were male and 44% were female. The NCES data from Cohort 2013 for two-year postsecondary institutions, 13% African Americans graduated from public institutions and 50% African Americans from private for-profit institutions whereas 48% African Americans graduated from private for-profit institutions.

The debt burden of college plays a vital role in the declining interest of pursuing postsecondary education. The cost associated with postsecondary education can be a barrier for many African-American students. The financial resources of students of color can often dictate where they attend college (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York (2013), between the years of 2005 and 2012, the cost of the average student loan balance has increased by 60% to about 25,000. Potential debt problems influence college students' decisions on what majors to enter as they are less likely to choose education after graduating due to the expectation of acquiring more debt (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). For those that do pursue education they will encounter additional financial barriers in the form of standardized assessments.

Standardized tests. Teacher licensure exams are required by 35 states and 41 states require teaching candidates to pass exams before receiving their teaching credential (Greenberg Motamedi, Yoon, & Hanson, 2021). The purpose of the exams is to ensure that candidates meet the necessary academic criteria and eliminate those who do not have the knowledge or skill sets

necessary to be an effective teacher (Gitomer & Zisk, 2015). Of those prospective teachers, a significant amount of test takers—particularly those of color—do not continue to pursue teaching due to their inability to pass the test (Cowan, Goldhaber, Jin, & Theobald, 2020). In California, teacher licensure exams include the California Basic Education Skills Test (CBEST), California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) and the California Teaching Performance Assessment (excluded for special education teachers). Pearson designed and administers these teacher licensure exams and are considered the "gatekeepers" to TPPs in California and other states throughout the United States (Petchauer, 2012, p. 252). Privatization of teacher assessments Pearson and other educational testing services administer affect the ability to influence the racial make-up of the teaching profession (Petchauer, 2012). Education is the only major an individual must test into by passing the basic skills assessments before being permitted to continue (Petchauer, 2012). Some TPPs require you to pass the CBEST as well as the CSET before entering their TPP.

Standardized tests for African-American candidates have profoundly impacted their ability to enter the field of education, and candidates are less likely to pass standardized tests the first time than their white counterparts (Madkins, 2011). The National Center for Fair Open Testing (2020) found that the pass rates for African Americans for CBEST is 34% compared to 80% pass rates for Whites. Although states implemented standardized tests to ensure teaching candidates that entered the field are subject matter competent, they have become a major barrier (Carver-Thomas, 2017). Some researchers have asserted that standardized tests are intentional gatekeepers to keep African Americans out of education programs (Bennett, McWhorter, & Kuykendall, 2006). In light of the history of standardized tests being used to show people of color as less intelligent (Sacks, 1999) and their larger role in reducing the number of Black

teachers in the United States (Madkins, 2011), these critiques of teacher licensure exams are important to continue developing (Petchauer, 2012, pp. 253 and 254).

In contrast to the belief that teacher licensure tests are racially biased, some believe that the inability of many African Americans to pass exams is due to other variables such as lack of preparation or skills (Petchauer, 2014). Deficits in quality education can also be the underlying factor in the gaps between African-American and White test takers (Bryant, 2015). Gitomer and Zisk (2015) proposed that the gaps between African-American and White test takers speak to differences in abilities, knowledge, and educational experiences. The authors observed that teacher licensure exams are indicators of which teacher candidates will be successful in teacher preparation programs.

Petchauer (2012) pointed out the traumatic social psychological effects of teacher licensure exams on African Americans. Social psychology is the study of "human behavior as it is influenced by others and the social context in which it occurs" (McLeod, 2007). The same study conducted by Petchauer (2012) found that the process of taking the teacher licensure exams can become a "racialized experience" for African Americans; this can occur through exchanges with the people responsible for giving the test or by other test takers that may exhibit racial stereotypes surrounding the test-taking process. The author analyzed how stereotypes can threaten test performance due to the risk of fulfillment of a negative stereotype to which one may belong.

Although there is varying research on teacher licensure exams, the impact on African Americans and other teachers of color is apparent (Petchauer, 201). Once they overcome the barriers of lack of preparation for post-secondary education, financial struggles, and teacher

licensure exams, African-American teachers encounter additional problems as they continue to navigate entry into the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Discriminatory hiring practices. As a result of Brown v. Board of Education's unintended consequences, African-American teachers are employed at a lower rate than their White colleagues.(Lutz, 2017). Due to the ruling and the racial climate it created, Whites were uncomfortable with African-American teachers teaching their children (Green, 2004). Identifying the point at which these practices took root allows for reflection and understanding that discrimination within the hiring structures in education does exist. D'Amico, Pawlewicz, Earley, and McGeehan (2017) found that qualified African-American teaching applicants are less likely to receive an offer of employment from districts than White applicants. The initial study conducted by D'Amico et al. (2017) in 2012-2013 attempted to analyze the African-American teacher applicant data and hiring practices of a U.S. school district. The undisclosed district was ranked among one of the largest in the nation. The student population was 40% White, 10% African-American 20% Hispanic, and 20% Asian. Egalite, Kisida, and Winters. (2015) found that students' performance is enhanced when they have access to teachers of the same race, it is thus essential that teacher racial composition of districts mirror student composition. For districts to recruit and retain a diverse population of teachers, the district had 2,380 teaching vacancies, 11,980 applicants submitted 27,330 applications. African-American candidates received 6% of the job offers; the results revealed that White applicants received the majority of the offers (Egalite et al., 2015).

Although African-American and White candidates are equally qualified, African-American teachers have been systematically excluded (D'Amico et al., 2017). The district in this study used Gallup's TeacherInsight (TI) assessment to determine applicants' eligibility. TI

is a talent-based program that measures the potential of teacher candidates by considering their

current residence, educational background, and work experience (D'Amico et al.,

2017). D'Amico et al. (2017) found that African-American applicants were not as likely as

White candidates to pass with the recommended TI score. There was a 58% pass rate for

African-American applicants and a 65% pass rate for Whites (D'Amico et al., 2017). The

authors also found that although African-American teachers in this study did not meet the

recommended scores as often as White applicants, they were more likely to hold more advanced

degrees.

Discriminatory hiring practices within school districts is an additional barrier that

African-American teachers face. African-American teachers account for a small percentage of

the teaching workforce and as a result of their tokenism they also experience performance

pressures, boundary heightening and role entrapment (Kelly, 2007). Being African-American in

the field of education that is White-dominated can lead to experiences based on stereotypes and

assumptions. Although the initial terminology *racial tokenism* was coined to describe work

experiences in corporate America it can also be applied to the experiences of African-American

teachers in the field of education (Kelly, 2007).

Performance Pressures

Kanter (1977) defined *tokenism* as an "artificial appearance" achieved by including a

small number of members of the minority group in influential positions within the existing group

due to their characteristics (gender, race, religion, or age) that are accepted as disadvantages or

are different from the dominant group's characteristics (Yilmaz & Dalkilic, 2019). African

American teachers working in predominantly White school cultures represent 7% of the teaching

population nationally, with limited representation in the school environments; when they are

present, they are highly visible (Kelly, 2007). Kanter (1977) observed that performance

pressures occurred because of high visibility. High visibility can lead to African-American

teachers being recognized as representatives of their race(Kelly, 2007). One teacher shared in

the article by Griffin and Tackie (2017, p.7), "We become the representative for every child of

color, I mean, whether we relate to them, whether our culture is the same or not. We become the

representative for all of those children." Being representatives of their race, African-American

teachers often felt the pressure to support African-American students out of obligation from their

White colleagues and administrators (Carver-Thomas, 2017). Although African-American

teachers often identify with many of the struggles African-American students encounter, there is

also a percentage of teachers who struggle to understand African-American students that may

come from different backgrounds related to socioeconomic status, family, or cultural background

(Griffin & Tackie, 2017). The characteristic of overgeneralizing and being representatives of

their race often leads to African-American teachers feeling marginalized and only suited to work

with African-American students. This can lead to burnout causing them to exit the field of

education at quicker rates (Carver-Thomas, 2017).

Boundary Heightening

Boundary heightening happens when differences between the token and the majority are

over-inflated or divided in sharply opposing beliefs (Kanter, 1977). African-American teachers

often encounter these phenomena in their daily professional lives as they leverage their cultural

similarities to provide quality education to students (Griffin & Tackie, 2017). In an article

entitled "Through Our Eyes," Griffin and Tackie (2017) discussed how African-American

teachers leverage their cultural similarities to benefit engagement for students. Many become

pigeonholed in positions due to their connections with students because their White colleagues

and administrators may see their ability to address students' challenging behavior and their strong classroom management styles and begrudgingly lock them into the role of disciplinarian.

For some African-American teachers, being locked in the role of disciplinarian can lead to other colleagues viewing them as lacking expertise (Carver-Thomas, 2017). When this happens, it stifles African-American teachers' ability to grow professionally, limiting their access to leadership roles and opportunities to work with advanced or gifted students (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014).

Role Entrapment

Role entrapment derives from stereotypes about the token in the dominant society (Kanter, 1977). When African-American teachers are viewed as representatives of their race and pigeonholed as disciplinarians, it minimizes their roles in their workplaces (Kelly, 2007). Being tokens in a field where 80% of the teaching population is White, African-American teachers often encounter undesirable school cultures and climates (Dixon et al., 2014). Implicit bias in the workplace can be common in negative school cultures; African-American teachers in these environments have expressed feeling voiceless in the company of their colleagues and administrators (Dixon et al., 2014). Lacking respect from their colleagues and administrators, their decisions and credentials are questioned (Griffin & Tackie, 2017). In the article by Griffin and Tackie, African-American teachers shared how they often must explain their qualifications to parents, colleagues, and administrators:

> I think one of the challenges I dealt with was convincing parents that our decisions are the right decisions. And I say that because a lot of parents would look to the White teachers and whatever they say was golden. There was no questioning them. Whatever they said was the right thing. But when it came to the African-American teachers, it was

always a question. There was always some pushback. There was some uncertainty

around 'What is it exactly? Why do you know that?' And so I think that was one of the

challenges I had, having to always go an extra step to convince people that what we're

doing is the right thing. (p. 6)

In other instances, African-American teachers shared how their contributions were not

celebrated by their administrators as much as their White counterparts leaving them to feel as if

their connection to the school community is nonexistent and "instead of their identity being an

asset, it serves as a factor pushing them out of the profession" (Dixon et al., 2014, p. 9). Despite

the many obstacles many African-American teachers encounter, some of them persist and

continue to enjoy productive careers as teachers.

Nontraditional Programs

This section explores nontraditional programs in California that focus on the recruitment

and retention of African-American teachers in public school settings. To increase the number of

teachers of Color requires great intentionality that accounts for the necessary navigation needed

to overcome common barriers they may encounter (Carver-Thomas, 2017). As the pursuit

continues to increase the presence of teachers of Color, the number of African-American

teachers continues to decline (Madkins, 2011). While highly qualified teachers have the ability

to teach students of color, researchers have shown that teachers of the same race can build

effective relationships and enhance academic outcomes (Evans & Leonard, 2013). In

recognition of the relevant research, the need to provide alternate routes for African-American

teachers to enter the teaching pipeline is essential to the wellbeing of African-American students

and beneficial to all students (Madkins, 2011).

Historically and presently, traditional TPPs are barriers for teachers of Color due to cost, access, and lack of diversity (Carver-Thomas, 2017). Traditional TPPs serve undergraduate students who have not taught nor had experience in an academic environment (OPE, 2016). TPP's are designed to provide teacher licensure after completion of a bachelor's degree (Evans & Leonard, 2013). The largest demographic of traditional TPPs is 74% White and African-American students only account for 9% of the racial makeup (OPE, 2016). Nontraditional pathways, also known as alternative certification programs, were created to address the teacher shortage and low percentages of teachers of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018). In light of the barriers associated with traditional teacher preparation programs, these nontraditional pathways have enabled prospective teaching candidates with bachelor's degrees to enter the classroom with temporary credentials while working on completing necessary teaching certifications (Evans & Leonard, 2013; OPE, 2016). Nontraditional pathways attract a different population of teaching candidates such as those entering from different fields and teachers of color (Madkins, 2011).

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2017), nontraditional pathways are available across the United States with the exclusion of Wyoming, North Dakota, and Ohio. These pathways can be within or outside of institutions of higher education (IHE). The DOE (2017) reports, post-graduate prerequisites in nontraditional teaching programs in 2014 within IHE were GPA of 2.5 and for non IHE transcript verification, subject matter competency and credit hours completed. Unlike traditional TPPs that require candidates to have supervised clinical hours, as a teacher of record, candidates receive mentor or induction support. Non-traditional programs in the United States in IHE enroll 16% percent of African-American prospective teaching candidates and IHE programs outside IHE produce 18%.

A recent study by Putman, Hansen, Walsh, and Quintero (2016) projected the teacher-student diversity gap into 2060 and predicted that the diversity gap for African-American students would most likely remain roughly the same, while the gap for Hispanic teachers and students would widen. Programs that focus on diversification of the workforce with an emphasis on social justice are critical for transforming the teaching pipeline (Gist-Mackey, Wiley, & Erba, 2017). In this current climate of social unrest, it is crucial that teacher education programs are actively recruiting and preparing them for the teacher workforce (Evans & Leonard, 2013).

Oakland CA, a place known for social activism, makes the perfect backdrop for exploration of programs that increase and retain African-American teachers (Karpinski, 2008). Rogers-Ard (2014) described Oakland as "a city rooted in oppression but is also a city focused on the principles of revolution, critical discourse, and engagement" (p. 34). Grow-your-own programs (GYOs), such as Teach Tomorrow Oakland, are examples of a nontraditional program that has had success recruiting African-American teacher candidates. Black Teacher Project is another featured program that has worked to provide support while retaining African-American teacher populations in Oakland CA. W. E. B. DuBois once said, "If the Negro was to learn, he must teach himself, and the most effective help that could be given him was the establishment of schools to train Negro teachers" (DuBois, 1935, p. 1).

GYOs address the disparity that many school districts were having in regards to diversification and teacher shortages (Valenzuela, 2016). This is done by drawing on the strength of accessing a more diverse pool of potential candidates from the local communities or school district populations that may range from students to classified staff (Gist-Mackey et al., 2017). Districts will often partner with institutions of higher learning to prepare paraprofessionals or other classified staff to become certified teachers (Valenzuela, 2016). By

doing this, districts are more likely to gain teachers that not only reflect the student population but also are invested in students, the district, and the community (Bireda & Chait, 2011). Most GYOs cover the teaching continuum from recruitment through retention and "foster academic identity development, cultural relevance, language-and-race-conscious pedagogies, and critical perspectives that disrupt institutional hierarchies and dehumanizing discourses, policies and practices" (Valenzuela, 2016).

In Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), African-American teachers account for 20% and African-American students account for 22.9% of the student population (OUSD Data, 2020). Focusing on programming to increase the number of teachers of color, OUSD's talent division offers multiple GYO program pathways for community members and classified staff to enter the teacher pipeline. Their motto, "Teach Lead in Oakland," emphasizes increasing the diversity of their workforce, looking to the community members that work in afterschool programs and classified employees (OUSD Data, 2020). Drawing from the wealth of the community (parents, school aids, and activists) will provide long term and dedicated teachers (Gist-Mackey et al., 2017). Understanding the level of dedication required to grow their own, they implement the following pillars, pipeline development and navigation access, supporting the development of critical pedagogy, and community and emotional support. OUSD offers five distinct pathways to community members:

- Oakland Teacher Residency
    - o This program is a one year paid program. Participants (apprentice) interested in teaching science, math or special education are paired with a mentor while earning their credential.

- Local Solutions for Special Education
    - o In an effort to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, this program provides career development support for novice special education teachers to acquire the skills to become strong leaders within the special education field.

- Classified to Teacher Program
  - This program supports classified staff of OUSD that is interested in earning a teacher credential.

- After School to Teacher Pipeline
  - After school program staff can use this pathway to become a credentialed teacher.

- Maestras Program through the Office of Latino Student Achievement
  - In an effort to develop more Latino teachers, this pathway can assist them in acquiring their teacher credential.

- Newcomer Residency Program at Oakland International High School
  - This program captures new talent and allows them to broaden their professional development as they navigate their teaching pathway.

Each pathway also includes participants' tuition and test prep support. OUSD's aim is to create a community of practice for emerging teachers that will continue to diversify and plug the holes in teaching pipelines within OUSD (OUSD Data, 2020). The Learning Policy Institute (Carver-Thomas, 2017) found that financial incentives were correlated with diversity, and when teachers of color were presented with loan forgiveness they saw a 4% increase in the number of teachers of color entering that particular district. In addition, GYO programs that underwrite a large portion of educational cost are effective when looking to recruit teachers (Carver-Thomas, 2017).

Rogers-Ard (2014) explored the origins and the foundations of Teach Tomorrow Oakland. Mayor Ronald Dellums implemented Teach Tomorrow Oakland (TTO) in 2008 to create an antiracist teaching pool that would reflect the diversity of the student population in Oakland. TTO would seek to attract teachers of color who would commit to working for Oakland Unified for five years. Teach Tomorrow Oakland partners with Holy Names University. The University provides rolling admission allowing students to enroll at different points throughout the year. University supervisors work with candidates to ensure proper

curricular alignment and ensure candidates are prepared to meet the challenges of subject matter competency.

The TTO motto is "Reach and Teach," the organization argues that if teachers are able to reach students through creating safe environments, personal connections, and implementing relevant cultural pedagogies then students will be able to learn (Evans & Leonard, 2013). TTO also asserts that "Teachers are not hired," they use five phases to support teachers: retain, select, induct, place, and retain (Rogers-Ard, 2014, p. 20). This is not an alternative certification agency but instead works in partnership with OUSD to provide nontraditional certification to ensure recruits have entry into the teaching pathway. Teachers that choose to enter through alternative certification work fulltime as interns working as the teacher of record as well as receiving full teacher salary and benefits.

Based on Rogers-Ard (2014) article, TTO's local theory is grounded in place-based education (PBE), which is a teaching strategy that uses student location, culture, opportunities, and experiences to teach subjects across the curriculum (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008). Coupled with community activism, PBE is a formula that works well with teacher participation and student engagement, which has led to deeper investments for teachers as well as better outcomes for students. PBE strategies are used to select prospective teachers; once they have demonstrated their proficiency they are tasked to teach a lesson in front of students, current TTO teachers, principals, and other community members. Designated observers use rubrics to score prospective teachers on delivery, connectedness, and their potential ability to adapt to diverse classroom settings. This process allows principles and school community members the opportunity to identify which prospective teachers would be the best fit for their school communities.

TTO takes great pride in preparing teachers by pushing past the barriers that most teachers of color encounter. They continue to support teachers through recruitment, induction, and beyond, by creating supportive communities in which teachers can continue to grow. Rogers-Ard (2014) emphasized the importance of opportunities to mentor and give back. Once teachers have completed three years with exemplary performance as documented in district evaluations, they are eligible to become "Teacher Leaders." Teacher Leaders act as mentors and guides to incoming teachers new to the program and are able to provide insight and experiences to assist new teachers navigate the teacher pathway (Rogers-Ard, 2014).

Although recruitment continues to be difficult, retention of current African-American teachers has and continues to be an issue of sustainability (Mosley, 2018). Organizations such as the Black Teacher Project (BTP), also based in Oakland, CA., are determined to provide a racial affinity space that supports, develops, and retains highly qualified teachers through professional development that focuses on cultural responsiveness. Racial affinity groups provide a space of learning and development for a specific racialized group that has experienced the trauma of institutional racism (Mosley, 2018). By addressing the realities of systematic racism teachers of color can benefit from drawing upon culture and community (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016).

The BTP believes that teachers are political agents who have the unique ability to use their platforms to invoke positive change in society (Mosley, 2018). Using critical professional development, the BTP designs their workshops to develop teachers' critical "consciousness" by emphasizing the importance of liberatory teaching (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016). Liberatory teaching calls teachers to utilize alternative teaching styles that are equity and justice centered by assisting students in developing their abilities to actively enhance their cognition (Hammond, 2021). The

types of racial affinity professional development offered by the BTP include: Black teacher

inquiry, Black teacher wellness and rejuvenation, and book study.

The Black teacher inquiry group meets monthly. Instructors implement a Equity-Based

Critical Friends Protocol developed by a San Francisco coalition of small schools, they examine

problems African-American teachers face in their daily practice and how that intersects with

other parts of their identity. Participants engage in discussions as well as come up with resilient

practices that can help them navigate microaggressions or other inequities they may encounter in

their professional practice. Teachers that participated reported feeling safe and appreciated

sharing space with other teachers that share the same racial background (Mosley, 2018).

Mosley (2018) emphasized that the Black teacher rejuvenation monthly meetings are

designed to support the physical, emotional, and social health of African-American

teachers. Participants learn mindfulness techniques that they can utilize during hectic or stressful

days. Teachers also have the opportunity to participate in art-based professional development

led by African-American teachers. Another important element of rejuvenation is hearing from

the voices of veteran and retired teachers also known as "Elder Wisdom." They share their

experiences of how they navigated school systems and provide advice to current teachers

working in public or charter school settings. The Black Teacher Leadership and Sustainability

Institute teaches teachers how to leverage who they are and the skills they bring to lead in the

classroom. In addition, the BTP's affinity rejuvenation spaces emphasize the importance of

sustainability, wellness, and holistic practices for African-American teachers.

The BTP book study group focuses on culturally relevant literature that helps African-

American teachers build their tool kit. Participants are guided by BTP instructors through the

readings to extract important elements that may be useful to their teaching practices and their

connections with students of color (Mosley, 2018). At the conclusion, teachers that complete the required sessions as well as the final project are given a stipend.

Although the focus currently is on increasing the number of teachers of color, there are limited programs that are dedicated to the growth of African-American teachers. GYOs implemented by Oakland Unified and Teach Tomorrow Oakland provide nontraditional routes that have been successful in recruiting African-American teachers (Evans & Leonard, 2013). Programs such as the BTP work to provide affinity spaces meant to support and retain African-American teachers (Mosley, 2018). These types of programs provide a pathway into a profession by providing nontraditional pathways as well as providing spaces for African-American teachers and preservice teachers to use their voice. The voice component of CRT provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Theoretical Framework

Du Bois predicted the plight of African-American teachers when tens of thousands of African-American teachers lost their jobs in consequence of the Brown ruling (Madkins, 2011). Although historical factors set the stage for the decrease, contemporary issues have also had significant influence on the amount of African-American teachers entering the teacher pipeline (Madkins, 2011).

This section will provide a general overview of CRT as well as shed light on how societal racial undercurrents have contributed to the decline of African-American teachers. This theoretical lens speaks to the overwhelming White presence that currently exists in the teaching profession. In the field of education, CRT is commonly used to analyze the inequities and racism that occur in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2005). This study analyzes the recruitment and

retention practices of African-American teachers in the United States with a central focus on the California public school system.

Before delving into CRT, it is important to first define race and racism. The Oxford Dictionary (2020) has defined race as a person's physical characteristics such as their skin, eye color, or bone structure. Banks (1993) defined race to be a Eurocentric social construct created to cause division between racial groups in order for one race to dominate over the other. Racism is defined as a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress other people based on ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color (Marable, 1992). Three important points of racism are: (a) one group sees themselves superior to all other groups, (b) the group that deems themselves superior has the power to carry out racist behavior, and (c) racism benefits the superior group while negatively impacting the other racial groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

CRT emerged as a new movement giving balance to the justified belief and opinion of people of color. It was developed in the mid-1970s as a result of the failure of Critical Legal Studies inability to address racial disparities within the U.S. legal system and to give voice to the African-American experience (Minda, 1995). CRT's founder created the term racial realism to explain the continuance of Black Americans' inferior position, and by extension, White supremacy, in shaping legislation and other social policies was developed by Derrick Bell, Allen Freeman, and Richard Delgado (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT looks at the effects of race and racism, while also focusing on the sovereign system of white supremacy on merit based political systems. Minda (1995) argued that for far too long the White experience had been the primal benchmark for deciding legal equality for all, and as time has evolved became evident that people of color should have the same formal rights.

The field of education has now embraced CRT. Emerging as a powerful theoretical framework, CRT is becoming influential in educational research (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). In education, CRT conflicts with the ideology of White privilege by acknowledging and focusing on the experiences of people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Educational researchers have used counter-storytelling and permanence of race but have not implemented other aspects of CRT (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

The five tenets of CRT are counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, whiteness as property, interest convergence and critique of liberalism (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Counter-storytelling is the first tenant of CRT and has been one of the favorite tenets in educational research (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counter-storytelling is a means of telling a story that aims to cancel out the Eurocentric narrative that often perpetuate racial stereotypes (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). In education, counter-storytelling is used in various forms such as personal stories, other people stories and composite stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counter-storytelling provides an interface for others to understand what life is like for others and allows them a glimpse into their world (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

The second tenet of CRT is the permanence of racism. Bell (1992) argued that racism is an ingrained component of American society. The concept of the permanence of racism clarifies how political, social, and economic structures in the United States are controlled by racism (Ladson-Billings, 2005). DeCuir and Dixson (2004) stated that these structures "allocate the privileging of Whites and subsequent Othering of people of color in all arenas, including education" (p. 27).

Whiteness as property is another tenet of CRT. Due to the role race has played in the United States, the notion of Whiteness is considered a property interest. Harris (1995) identified

the three functions for the term property: the right of possession, the right to use, and the right to disposition. Therefore, Whiteness as property includes and supports exclusionary practices. Aggarwal (2015) described Whiteness as property and claimed that it "operates within the framework of capitalism and liberalism the modern form is grounded on the right to exclude yet allows for equal distribution of rights and uneven protection of those rights" (p. 132).

An additional tenet of CRT is interest convergence. Interest convergence implies that racial equality and equity for people of color will only prevail when it is in the best interest of the Whites (Milner, 2008). Leigh (2003) proposed that conflict arises when the interests of African Americans are in contradiction to or at "odds with those in power" it decreases the chances of exposing racism and therefore the pursuit of racial equality (p. 277). People in positions of power often support policies and practices that are not discriminatory if those in power do not have to alter their standing (Milner, 2008). In addition, Whites will accept and promote the interests of people of color when they align with the self-interest of Whites (Lopez, 2003).

The final tenet of CRT is the critique of liberalism. This tenet encompasses three philosophies: the notion of colorblindness, neutrality of law, and incremental change (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Although the philosophies may appear to be positive pursuits, the neutrality of them fails to take in account the permanence of racism in the United States and how deeply entrenched it is in American culture (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Minda (1995) believed that formal equality has been achieved and has aligned himself with the ideals of a colorblind society. However, colorblindness fails to acknowledge the dismantling of protective policies put in place to address societal inequity (Gotanda, 1991).

CRT will be employed to further understand recruitment and retention practices of African-American teachers. The tenets of CRT focus on the importance of counter-storytelling

to contradict the mainstream narratives, the permanence of racism, interest convergence and

Whiteness as property. The tenet of storytelling is employed to give voice to the obstacles and

celebrations of African-American teachers.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand what is behind the declining numbers of African-American teachers in public school settings. Although all prospective teachers face hurdles, those African Americans face are compounded by additional factors such as socioeconomic status, access, finances, and support (Rovai & Wighting, 2005). According to Desiree Carver-Thomas (2017) of the Learning Policy Institute, while the population of teachers of color is increasing, those of African American descent are declining. The following acted as the overarching question: what is behind the declining numbers of African-American teachers in public school settings?

This chapter will include an academic exploration of the definition and applications of qualitative research. The second section will provide a historical perspective of phenomenology and its two main approaches: descriptive and interpretive. Subsequent sections will discuss participant selection, data collection, analysis methods, trust worthiness, researcher's reflections, and limitations, concluding with a chapter summary.

Qualitative Methodology

Maxwell (2013) described qualitative methods as an interactive model that encompasses five parts: goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methods, and validity. The strength of qualitative methods lies in the ability to focus on a condition or people (Maxwell, 2013). Quantitative research explains phenomena by gathering numerical data that are examined using mathematical and statistical means (Creswell, 2012). In the proposed study, qualitative methods will provide the perspective and account of incidences, actions, and events that shaped the experiences of the educator.

African-American teachers, also known as warm demanders, are slowly exiting the field

of education. Their slow but steady withdrawal has had phenomenal impacts on African-

American students as well as the educational community as a whole, as well as impacting teacher

to student ratios in U.S. school systems (Cheng, 2017). African-American teachers make up 7%

of the teaching workforce in the United States and 4% in the diverse state of California (CDE,

2019). The U.S. Department of Education (2017) identified several points from which teachers

of color could exit the teacher pipeline; postsecondary enrollment, enrollment in education

programs, postsecondary completion, entering the workforce, and teacher retention. Within

these points lie several factors that may negatively impact prospective teachers such as

insufficient preparation for success in postsecondary programs, standardized testing, financial

barriers, a lack of diversity in the pedagogy implemented in teacher preparation programs

(TPPs), and discrimination (Madkins, 2011). This study looked at the factors that impact the

identified areas within the teacher pipeline that have resulted in the decline of the academic

achievement of African-American students.

The qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand what is behind the

phenomenon of the declining numbers of African-American teachers in public school settings. It

will enable a systematic approach to the social phenomena in natural settings (Martimianakis et

al., 2015). Qualitative research provides the researcher the ability to focus on African-American

teachers and understand their perspectives and how events, actions, and meanings have shaped

the current circumstance of high attrition rates among African-American teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

RSQ 1. What obstacles have African-American teachers encountered that have impacted
their desire to enter, remain or leave the teaching profession?

RSQ 2. What motivates African-American teachers to remain in the teaching profession?

RSQ 3. What do current African-American teachers think will increase the number of African-American teachers entering the field?

Study Participants

The participants in this research were chosen deliberately and purposefully in order to get a better understanding of the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2012). This qualitative research included African-American teachers. Each of the participants satisfied the same criteria. The requirements were self-identification as African-American/Black, teaching in grades K-12, and working in the public school system for at least two years. Participants who did not satisfy all three criteria were considered disqualified.

The research study recruited participants through Phinished/Finished, a Facebook network that reaches out to Doctoral students around the nation. A leaflet detailing the goal of the study and the participants' criteria was displayed. Participants who expressed interest and satisfied the eligibility requirements were contacted through email. Each participant identified as a K-12 educator with at least two years of experience teaching in a public school context and had a common ethnic origin.

Data Collection

The data collection process started with interviews, one of the four fundamental types of qualitative data (Creswell, 2012). "The data collecting technique is decided by the study's question and the source or sources of data that will provide the most information to answer the issue" (Merriam, 1998, p. 12). To capture the complexity of the participants' experiences, 2 30-60 minute Zoom interviews were performed with each participant. Zoom was used to capture and gather data from participants. Each participant got an electronic version of the informed

consent form using Adobe Sign before the first interview. The informed consent form included information on the study, the time commitment, the risks and benefits, compensation (voluntary), participant rights, confidentiality, data collection, and contact information. The first interview consisted of 13 questions that supplied the researcher with critical background information and also established the required rapport for the second session. Participants were interviewed again two days following their first interview. Each participant responded to 20 specific questions on the study's key phenomena (Creswell, 2012).

Data Analysis

Comprehending the complexities of human behavior may take a variety of forms. Researchers are often the main instrument utilized in qualitative research for data gathering and processing. The six steps outlined by Creswell (2012) for analyzing and interpreting qualitative data were followed: data preparation and organization, database exploration and coding, describing findings and formal themes, representing and reporting findings, interpreting the meaning of the findings, and validating the accuracy of the findings themes. Following each interview, the recordings were downloaded and submitted to Otter.ai for transcription and data preparation. Once the transcripts were completed, the participants' IDs were deleted and they were allocated a number. The researcher evaluated transcripts for context and then read them line by line a second time to ensure data correctness before comparing them to the audio to validate participant replies.

Hand analysis, according to Creswell (2012), may be performed if the researcher is studying less than 500 pages and is also advised if the researcher wants to be close to the data. Coding is the first step in the qualitative process of text analysis. The coding process is "how you define the subject matter of the data you are examining" (Gibbs, 2007). Following that, the

transcript was manually examined and pertinent information was jotted down on color-coded post-it notes according to established codes. By using preset codes (concept-driven coding), the researcher is able to search for certain concepts or ideas inside the text (Gibbs, 2007). After transcribing and analyzing all ten interviews, the researcher generated a total of 60 codes.

After identifying the codes, the researcher analyzed the list and applied the hierarchical coding frame. The coding framework offered an organizational structure that aided the researcher in discovering themes and also allowed for the arrangement of codes according to their relatedness (Medelyan, 2021). The researcher then utilized predetermined codes as the top level codes, mid-level codes to decide if the codes were positive or negative, and third-level codes to connect the codes together into themes (Medelyan, 2021). Six categories were determined as a result of this method.

Finally, the researcher combined related categories to create themes that corresponded to the study's research goals. The researcher returned to interview transcripts in order to extract quotations that related to each subject. Following that, themes and research questions were connected. Saturation was achieved by triangulating replies from ten separate interviews, field notes, and published material (Creswell, 2012). The researcher categorized them into (6) categories as a consequence of the usage of a hierarchical coding frame, resulting in (8) themes that were strategically connected with the study's three research topics.

Trustworthiness

It is essential to establish trustworthiness and credibility, and this is accomplished through transparency in research procedures (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). In an effort to develop the concept of credibility, the researcher used three of the eight procedures outlined by Creswell and Poth (2017) to ensure validity: an explanation of researcher bias, member

checking, and detailed descriptions. The researcher outlined a summary of researcher bias in a section of the dissertation as well as journaling, field notes, and data analysis protocol. The researcher also provided a detailed account of each participant's experience. Member checking encouraged participant participation by including them in the analysis process in reviewing transcripts, as well as identifying patterns and themes for accuracy.

Researcher Bias

As a result of experiencing the obstacles that come with being an African-American teacher, it is apparent there needs to be a fundamental change in the way African-American teachers are recruited, supported, and retained. As a new teacher that did not follow the traditional route, I experienced the struggle of trying to pass teacher assessments, lack of support from my school site, department, and district. I struggled to maintain balance in my teacher induction program, teaching, family, and life.

African Americans and Latinos have the lowest pass rate for teacher licensure assessments compared to their White counterparts (Nettles, Scatton, Steinberg, & Tyler, 2011). Teacher licensure exams were a significant barrier for me. I recall taking the CBEST three times before passing, the CSET and RICA twice. At times, I felt like giving up and going into another profession, but I knew that teaching was my first love, so I devoted myself to doing whatever I could to pass the requirements. Unfortunately, not everyone has the same resources as I did, such as access to tutoring, unlimited funding, and family support. The CBEST can be a significant deterrent for people of color to enter the field of teaching. I had to wait a year before I was able to enroll in a teacher preparation program due to my inability to pass the CBEST.

After passing all necessary teacher licensure examinations and working two years without the support of my district's teaching preparation program, I was finally able to enroll in

my district's teacher induction program. To my dismay, the expectations and the level of support

I received were minimal and the increased workload was overwhelming at times. I often felt

unwanted, and what I was learning was not always applicable to what I was doing in my

classroom. I eventually chose to participate in a TPP outside of my district, where I was a self-

funded candidate. In my six years as a teacher, I often run into other African-American teachers

with similar accounts.

Based on personal and historical accounts African-American teachers.

I take the stance that the nation does not African-American teachers, nor do they value

our contributions to public or private school systems. African-American teachers are often

placed in hard to staff schools with minimal resources but are still held accountable for African-

American student performance (Barnum, 2018).

My Experience of Having a Same Race Teacher

Having an African American teacher during my K-12 years shaped my current trajectory

as a scholar and educator. Ms. Larkins was a member of my community; she was acquainted

with my mother and also attended a church with which my church frequently fellowshipped. I

had heard of her before, but I was not acquainted with her in an academic setting. Excited about

the prospect of being her favorite student, I anticipated the start of the school year with

trepidation. Unaware of how uncommon it is to have an African American teacher; I now

consider myself fortunate to be one of her students. I now understand the impact she had on my

life after reading current literature on the benefits of same-race teachers. Throughout that school

year, she taught me numerous lessons that I have carried into my every day and professional life,

such as accountability for my words and actions, the importance of appearance, and the

importance of incorporating what you love into your work.

As a child, and possibly even as an adult, we frequently say or do things out of anger without considering the consequences of our actions. Ms. Larkins taught me the value of accepting responsibility for my words and actions. I was enraged with another student one day, and as I stood in line with a friend, I began to speak negatively about her, unaware that Ms. Larkins was standing behind me. Before I realized it, I heard a voice behind me inquire if I truly meant what I was saying. I recall feeling humiliated that she overheard me say such heinous things. She explained that even if the other person does not hear what I say, I am still accountable for the words that come out of my mouth regardless of whether I intended them. She continued, "Once they leave your mouth, they take on a life of their own; you no longer have control over who hears them or how they are interpreted." I became a little more circumspect about what I said and how I said it after that.

Ms. Larkins had lovely dark brown skin and always arrived to school immaculately dressed. She instilled in me the belief that appearance is critical in a professional setting. I recall asking her why she dressed up every day; she explained that as a Black woman, it's critical to take pride in your appearance because you know others are watching and you might as well give them something to look at; she winked at me and walked away. As I reflect on that time period, I realize the extraordinary impact it had on me, seeing a mirror image of myself leading and teaching, demonstrating to me that I, too, was capable of leadership. As a young woman, I carried that with me, making it a point to inspire and encourage other young women to take pride in their appearance.

Ms. Larkins made a point of incorporating her passions into her work on a daily basis. At Arts Magnet School, Ms. Larkins taught the drama section. She used her theater knowledge to make learning more interesting and enjoyable. When Ms. Larkins entered the room, she

immediately commanded our attention and compelled us to listen. Her ability to connect with us

inspired me to strive to emulate her presence. She taught us that life is a stage and that you

should stand tall and use your platform to effect positive change.

Having Ms. Larkins as a teacher demonstrated to me that I, too, am capable of leadership.

As a child who attended predominantly White private schools, I was unfamiliar with African

American students, let alone African American teachers. Her presence instilled in me the

accountability, acceptance, and confidence that I, too, was capable of pursuing my dreams.

Limitations

The study may be limited due to the relatively small sample size African-American

teachers. However, in qualitative research this is an acceptable practice because the focus of the

research is based on the universal essence of a shared experience of an individual (Creswell,

2012). The researcher selected participants from multiple districts across the country,

which also present a limitation but due to the imbalance of the African-American teacher to

student ratios in public school settings nationwide, the individuals selected can be representatives

for their districts which provided good generalizability for other districts in states with no

participant representatives.

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, it is the goal of the researcher to investigate the underpinnings of the

continuous declining numbers of African-American teachers in public school settings. The

researcher employed a qualitative method to gather the stories and experiences of the participants

in order to better understand what is behind the declining numbers of African-American

teachers. The researcher used social media as a source of recruitment for participants. The

researcher then employed interviews to capture the participants' experiences as they pertain to

their unique experiences. Bracketing will help preclude bias and the researcher shared their

perceptions and biases in the final findings. Lastly, recommendations of interventions will be

discussed for effectiveness, and finally, reflection on the effects can be used by districts for

sustainability purposes of African-American teachers.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the causes that have led to the continued declining numbers of African American teachers working in public school settings. The study employs a qualitative research method to describe, interpret, and understand the phenomena experienced by African American teachers (Merriam, 1998). This includes the obstacles and motivational experiences that have impacted African American teachers' desire to enter into and/or remain in the teaching profession. The following research questions guided the study:

> RSQ 1. What obstacles have impacted African American teachers' desire to enter into, remain in, or leave the teaching profession?
>
> RSQ 2. What motivates African American teachers to remain in the teaching profession?
>
> RSQ 3. What do current African American teachers think will increase the number of African American teachers entering the field?

This chapter also includes a discussion of how the analysis conducted was consistent with the qualitative research methodology. Ten interviews were conducted and prepared for analysis. The analysis and interpretation of research data included the following six steps: data collection; preparation for analysis; review for general understanding of context; transcription; analysis by hand; coded and identified themes (Creswell, 2012).

Sample Population

The selection of participants for this study was conducted with the intention of increasing our understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012). The population for this qualitative study consisted of 10 African American teachers. All 10 participants met the same qualifications. These qualifications included identifying as African American/Black, having

taught in a K-12 classroom, and working in the public school system for two or more years.

Participants who did not meet all three qualifiers were deemed ineligible.

Recruitment of participants for this research study was done through Phinished/Finished, a Facebook community for doctoral students across the country. The researcher posted a flyer outlining the study's purpose along with the required qualifications. Participants that showed interest and met the qualifications were contacted via email. Each participant identified as K-12 educators that had taught for two or more years in a public school setting and shared the same ethnic background.

Table 1
Demographic Data of Study Participants

Participant #	Gender	State of Origin	Grade Taught
1	Female	California	Middle School
2	Female	California	Elementary
3	Female	Georgia	Elementary
4	Male	Florida	High School
5	Female	California	Elementary
6	Female	California	Elem/High School
7	Male	North Carolina	High School
8	Female	New York	Elementary
9	Female	Oklahoma	High School
10	Female	California	High School

Data Collection

The procedure for acquiring data began with conducting interviews, one of the four basic categories of qualitative data (Creswell, 2012). "The data collection strategy used is determined by the question of the study and by determining which source or sources of data will yield the best information with which to answer the question" (Merriam, 1998, p. 12). To capture the richness of the participants' experiences, two 30-60-minute interviews per participant were

conducted over Zoom. Zoom provided a means of recording and collecting participant data. Prior to the first interview, each participant received an electronic version of the informed consent form via Adobe Sign (see Appendix). The informed consent form outlined a description of the research, the time involved, risks and benefits, compensation (voluntary), participants' rights, confidentiality, collection of information, and contact information. The first interview consisted of 13 questions that provided essential background information needed by the researcher, and also built necessary rapport needed for the second interview. A second interview was conducted two days after the first interview. Each participant answered 20 purposeful questions that focused on the central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2012).

Data Analysis

Understanding the complexity of human behavior requires a multifaceted approach. In qualitative research, researchers are often the primary instrument used for the collection and analysis of data. This study employed the six steps of analyzing and interpreting qualitative data outlined by Creswell (2012): preparing and organizing the data; exploring and coding the database; describing findings and formal themes; representing and reporting findings; interpreting the meaning of the findings; and validating the accuracy of the findings themes. After each interview, the interviews were uploaded to Otter.ai for transcription in order to prepare and organize the data. Once transcribed, identifiers were removed and participants were assigned a number. The number system was implemented to identify participants versus pseudonyms to streamline the process and present a gender-neutral representation to remove the focus on male versus female experiences. The researcher reviewed transcripts for context, reread them line-by-line for accuracy of data, and then compared them to the recording to verify participants' responses.

According to Creswell (2012), hand analysis may be used if the researcher is analyzing fewer than 500 pages and is recommended if the researcher wishes to be close to the data. The process of analyzing the text in the qualitative research process begins with coding. The coding process is "how you define what the data you are analyzing are about" (Gibbs, 2007). The transcript was then hand analyzed and relevant information was noted on color-coded post-it notes based on predetermined codes. Predetermined codes (concept-driven coding) allow the researcher to look for particular concepts or ideas in the text (Gibbs, 2007). After all 10 interviews were transcribed and analyzed, the researcher yielded 60 codes in total.

Once the codes were identified, the researcher reviewed the list of codes and utilized the hierarchical coding frame. This coding frame provides organizational structure to assist the researcher in identifying themes and organizing codes based on relatedness (Medelyan, 2021). The researcher then used pre-determined codes as the top-level codes, mid-level codes to determine if codes were negative or positive, and third-level codes to tie codes to associated themes (Medelyan, 2021). A total of six categories were identified after completing this process.

Finally, the researcher grouped similar categories together to develop themes that correlated with the study's research questions. The researcher revisited interview transcripts to extract quotes that were tied to each theme, and then correlated themes and research questions. Saturation was attained by triangulating responses from 10 individual interviews, field notes, and literature (Creswell, 2012). By grouping the six categories that resulted from the use of a hierarchical coding frame, the researcher identified eight themes that thoughtfully aligned with the study's three research questions (Table 2).

Findings

The organization of the research findings began with study findings and formal themes, representing and reporting findings, and validating the accuracy of themes. The study's findings yielded themes related to the declining numbers of African American teachers. Some of the identified themes include lack of respect for teachers in the African American community, teacher licensure exams, lack of recruitment efforts, and low teacher salaries.

Research Question 1

What obstacles have impacted African American teachers' desire to enter into, remain in, or leave the teaching profession? Two themes were associated with this question: (1) the placement of African American teachers in high-needs schools, and (2) a lack of respect for African American teachers from parents and peers. For the first theme, the aligned categories are: (a) unprepared to work in high-needs schools, (b) lack of resources, and (c) lack of support. The second theme yielded three categories: (a) parents' lack of participation or buy-in, (b) microaggressions, and (c) being a disciplinarian for African American students.

Placement of African American teachers in high-needs schools. Working in a high-needs school can be challenging for the most experienced teachers, but it can be overwhelming and exhausting for newly minted teachers. According to an article published by Walden University (2021), a high-needs school can be defined by three characteristics: the school serves more than 30% low-income students, the school has a 75% teacher vacancy rate, or a high percentage of teachers are teaching outside of their certification.

Unprepared to work in high-needs schools. The category "unprepared" in this study refers to African American teachers' feelings of not being sufficiently prepared to apply learned methodologies, pedagogical, and practicum ideologies in the classroom. Participant 01 stated:

I was not prepared. My school was in the middle of the hood. I don't think any teacher

program can prepare you for what you're going to encounter when you go into a high-

needs school. You have to learn on the battlefield.

Participant 02 expressed:

I think what prepared me was interning in the classroom. I don't feel like my teaching

program prepared me or supported me as much as I would have liked them to.

Participant 03 shared:

No. I was not prepared! I remembered thinking to myself, "This is not going to work." It

was like [the film] *Lean On Me* or something. It was a really rough school. The stuff I

learned in my program did not prepare me for this.

Participant 04 articulated:

I don't think programs prepare you for all public school settings. They prepare you for

the "model" public schools, not the low-income ones. I wasn't prepared to work in inner

city schools.

Lack of resources. A lack of resources could range from limited classroom supplies to a

lack of access to curriculum and programming for students and teachers. Teachers often tap into

their finances to purchase supplies they feel are needed in their classrooms, such as copy paper,

crayons, pencils, books, and other supplies. Participant 06 said, "I have purchased snacks, paper,

and incentives for my students, so I try to set aside at least $100.00 a month." Similarly,

Participant 02 shared:

In my early years of teaching, sometimes I had to choose between the things I wanted and

the things my students needed. Sometimes I chose myself, but most of the time, students'

needs came before my own.

Teachers seeking to improve their teaching practice also pay out of pocket to receive additional training that their schools or districts will not reimburse. Participant 07 stated: "I wanted to attend a special education teachers' workshop, but my principal stated she did not have it in her budget, so I paid $150.00 to attend." Several African American teachers in this study felt that supplementary resources/materials were often in limited supply. Teachers' salaries are typically lower than salaries in other professions and providing supplemental resources can take a toll on teachers' finances.

Lack of support. In a recent article, De La Rosa (2020) found that 55% percent of teachers would appreciate more support and respect from administrators, parents, and community members. Several participants in the study expressed frustration due to a lack of support. One teacher associated his performance with the amount of support and resources he received. Participant 03 shared, "When I have all my needs met, I have the necessary resources that motivate me to work harder." Participant 06 expressed:

> Admin is not quick to help but quick to criticize. I once sent a student out for being disruptive, [and] five minutes later administrators sent him right back. At the end of the day, I received an email from the administrator instructing me to work on my classroom management. They offered no suggestions, just reprimand.

Participant 02 shared:

> Our district leadership at the top right now are embracing a bully mentality, so principals are afraid to ask for necessary resources, limiting the amount of support they are able to give to teachers. Some support or lack of support can be attributed to the teachers' race.

Participant 01 said:

> My administrator failed to acknowledge me publicly and privately, but she recognized
> and celebrated my white colleague. So, a lot of times I didn't feel comfortable enough to
> ask for help.

Lack of respect for African American teachers from parents and peers. A perceived
lack of respect can impact morale or motivation for both tenured teachers and teachers just
entering the teaching profession. There are two relationships of focus that can significantly
impact teachers' enthusiasm, namely their relationships with their colleagues and students'
parents. Understanding the all-encompassing role of a teacher provides perspective on their
importance in educating, inspiring, and aligning students to social connections. Teachers also
benefit from connections and collaborations with their colleagues as they build professional
learning communities that create strategies for enabling student learning. The importance of
parent-teacher relationships, as well as teacher-colleague relationships, has been well
documented. Each one is vital to the success of students and the longevity of teachers' careers.
There are three categories aligned with this theme: (a) parents lack of support and buy-in; (b)
microaggressions; and (c) playing the role of disciplinarian for Black students.

Parents lack support and buy-in. Parents' lack of support and buy-in refers to the
absence of support and engagement in their children's education. Parent involvement is an
integral part of student success. Parents can encourage, motivate, and direct student
performance. In this study, African American teachers reported that many parents are
disengaged and do not provide the appropriate support to help their children succeed. Participant
04 shared: "We need important stakeholders such as parents to see the value in education. Lack

of support for many students has resulted in behavior problems, poor academic performance, and attendance issues." Participant 02 said:

> A lot of parents carry negative experiences from their childhood into the education of their children. So, when problems arise with students, not only are you trying to formulate positive relationships with students, but you often have to try and repair old stuff that happened with the parents in the same district.

Common reasons for lack of parent involvement identified by study participants included parents' limited education, language barriers, and not feeling welcome at their children's schools. Other extenuating circumstances could stem from joblessness, depression, or drug abuse. Participant 03 expressed:

> Parents are not involved as much as people think; it is not that they do not care. I think their lack of involvement comes from being obligated to do other things; if you have to work, you will not be able to come to the parent-teacher conference. When I think back on my childhood, my mom was able to take off because my dad was helping support us. A lot of the students we have now come from single-parent households. Some students are experiencing trauma at home. Some parents are in abusive situations, and some kids are navigating school on their own.

Disciplinarian for African American students. Taking responsibility for African American students is a common experience shared by the majority of the African American teachers in this study. The depth of this calling ranged from being hired at a school with a large population of Black and Brown students to running a classroom filled with students with disciplinary issues or having African American students sent to them individually for "the

talk." Many African American teachers received placement in high-needs schools based on race, and not experience. Participant 03 shared:

I can recall my first job placement, walking down the hallway thinking this is like [the movie] *Lean On Me*. I told my supervisor, "This is not going to work, just because I am Black doesn't mean I can connect with every Black student." I came from a middle-class background; we may look the same, but there are differences.

Participant 06 said:

There were two different teachers of record and myself concurrently teaching summer school. One teacher was an African American male and his assignment ended a week before mine and the other teacher's. His class consisted of mostly African American students. When he left, the new teacher found it difficult to manage so the students were moved to my class. There was no conversation, the students were just moved. My classroom environment went from a peaceful and easy-to-manage environment to a difficult and hard-to-manage environment. Two of the African American students were so disruptive they were suspended from summer school. Later I had a conversation with the previous male teacher and he found it interesting that all of his African American students were moved to my class.

Participant 08 expressed:

I felt like I would always get the overflow class with the most challenging students (majority of them are Black). My coworkers of a different race didn't get the challenging students. I got all the behavior issues and was expected to deal with them without support.

Participant 07 shared:

> If anything, I'm viewed as the disciplinarian. They send me all the kids that have been in
> juvenile hall. I get all those kind of special cases because I guess they think I can make
> an impact. In a way I can relate to them, but being a disciplinarian prevents me from
> doing other things that relate to teaching.

Microaggressions from co-workers. "Microaggressions" refers to the racial undertones
some African American teachers experience in their workplace. Several participants in this
study felt that microaggressions were a sign of lack of respect from their peers or colleagues.
Their coworkers' or students' parents' actions, comments, or questions have left them feeling
undervalued or not respected. Participant 03 divulged:

> At my current school I was one of the few Black teachers initially. They gave me the
> toughest and worst home room but, honestly, I was the only one able to handle them. I
> remember one of the teachers on my team saying to me, "Oh, I already know why they
> listen to you." I knew what she meant, but that wasn't the reason they listened to me.

Participant 09 expressed:

> I expressed to a colleague that I wanted to apply for a leadership position, her response
> was, "You're a good teacher, but do you think you're qualified for that?" Never mind the
> fact that I have years of being a department lead or the fact that I have plenty of
> education—having Black skin was my only setback in her eyes.

Participant 06 asserted:

> I had a lot to overcome in my teaching practice that I would attribute to my race. I've
> had certain colleagues within my community who have not been the friendliest because

of the way I look, and those are the things I've had to mentally get past to be able to do

what needs to be done in the classroom.

Participant 01 shared:

During my first year of teaching, I was mistaken for a substitute and a custodian. I have

even had parents assume I was a safety officer. I know it was due to me being an African

American that these assumptions were made.

Participant 04:

My assist was an older White lady. When new staff would come to my class they would

walk right past my desk and go to hers. Even after my assist corrected them, they would

still be hesitant to talk with me.

Research Question 2

What motivates African American teachers to remain in the teaching profession? Three

themes were connected to research question two: (1) generations of teaching motivate African

American teachers to enter the field of teaching; (2) students motivate African American

teachers to persist in the teaching profession despite obstacles; and (3) being the difference that

African American students and all students see.

Generations of teaching motivate African American teachers to enter the field of

teaching. Since African Americans gained their freedom, they have understood the value of

education, recognizing that education was the key to freedom. Teaching was historically a

highly valued profession in the African American community, and generations of young men and

women sought to follow in the footsteps of those who came before them. Fast forward to today,

many African Americans continue the proud family tradition of teaching.

Participants 06 professed:

I come from a long history of teachers; it is in my DNA. I did a family tree with my

grandmother [and] we traced back teachers in our family for over 100 years and [in]

every generation of our family on her side. My grandfather on my biological father's

side was also a teacher.

Participant 01 added:

I come from a long line of teachers; they have been my greatest resource. My investment

and dedication in our community comes from them.

Participant 09 said:

My mother motivated me to teach. I am one of five kids, and out of those five, three of

us are teachers. I come from a long line of educators on my side. When we talk about

history, my parents went to segregated schools. When schools integrated, they refused to

bus Black students. My grandfather converted a public truck and made it a school bus to

bus Black students to school. Education is important to us.

Participant 10 shared:

I have several teachers in my family that have inspired me. My great aunt on my

mother's side is a teacher, and she is currently a substitute, teaching adult education

classes. On my father's side of the family, my great aunt was an educator. Interestingly

enough, my husband is also a teacher, as well as his mother. So teaching is a way of life

for us.

Being the difference African American students and all students see. Despite the

aforementioned obstacles, several participants in this study cited "making a difference" as the

primary motivator for continuing teaching. Their drive for making a difference often stemmed

from negative or positive experiences they had in their childhood.

Participant 07 disclosed:

> I hated school when I was younger, and it wasn't until I got to college that I realized the difference a good teacher could make. I was like, "Oh my gosh, this is how it could be." It was at that moment I realized I wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to be a teacher that students could connect to; I didn't have that. I knew my teachers didn't care about me. They just saw me as another Black kid.

Participant 05 shared:

> I am a Black male who is the product of the traditional public schools, and all I saw was despair. Students who looked like me were struggling; I noticed many kids in my third-grade class who could not read and progressed through high school. They were illiterate, so that motivated me to become an English teacher and continues to motivate me.

Students motivate African American teachers to persist in the teaching profession despite obstacles. Seeing students succeed can overshadow any negative connotations associated with teaching. For some of the African American teachers in this study, students are essentially the sole reason for persisting in the teaching profession. Although other reasons may direct people into the profession, reaping the rewards of student success is their primary motivator. Participant 09 expressed:

> I teach because it's important for African American students to see themselves in front, leading and teaching. Our responsibility is to ensure that Black students and all students have the support they need in order to be successful. We must close the education gap.

Participant 06 shared:

> The kids motivate me. Knowing I can listen to their struggles and conversations and help the process, or work through critical issues and know I genuinely care means a lot to me.

Participant 08 added:

> I love the kids, and I love working with children. I love seeing the difference that I make
>
> in their lives. The money and the salary are not there, but to me, it's worth it. It's worth
>
> it when you can be like a mother figure to them. I thoroughly enjoy that because,
>
> honestly, some of them don't have it at home.

Participant 05 explained:

> Every single time I tried to leave, God blocked it by allowing me to see one of my former
>
> students. They would say, "Oh, you taught me and look at what I've become," or "You
>
> changed my life; I got my degree." Seeing students grow is the most rewarding part.

Research Question 3

What do current African American teachers think will increase the number of African

American teachers entering the field? Three themes evolved from this research question: (1)

increase teacher salaries; (2) loan forgiveness will ease the financial barrier for African

American teachers to enter into and remain in the teaching profession; (3) increase respect for

education in the African American community.

Theme 1: Increase teacher salaries. The salary was the number one motivator that

could increase the number of African American teachers entering the profession. Teachers earn

less than other comparably educated professionals. The difference in the cost of education and

the cost associated with becoming an educator can leave some teachers at a deficit. Participants

in this study felt that teachers deserve to be paid more for their expertise in all the preservice

requirements needed to do their jobs effectively. Participant 06 said, "Teachers are not

compensated; they've surmounted unimaginable odds to become as educated as they are."

Participant 07 shared:

> If they want more African American teachers, they are going to have to make the field
>
> more alluring by increasing the amount of money they are willing to pay. Think of the
>
> hoops you jump through to become a teacher.

Participant 05 declared:

> The money would bring more African American teachers. You could do PD's all day,
>
> but if people can't pay their bills and make a living, they're not going to do it. In the first
>
> three years, teachers should be making 70k and then after five years go up to 75k. If
>
> teachers manage to make it ten years, they should move up to 100k. Oh yes, teachers
>
> deserve additional pay on top of their regular income for advanced degrees.

Theme 2: Loan forgiveness will ease the financial barrier for African American teachers. Loan forgiveness provides teachers an opportunity to have a little reprieve from the financial burden of student loan repayment. Teachers often struggle to make ends meet on their meager salaries. Many of the participants felt that there were not enough government-sponsored programs that offered loan forgiveness to teachers. Many programs require you to make on-time payments for five years before you qualify for the program, and if you miss a payment, it disqualifies you. Participant 05 stated:

> Student loan forgiveness is a must! Teaching is the only profession that you pay more to
>
> get into than you make. The system is backward. The government can do something, but
>
> they don't; it's just wrong.

Participant 06 explained:

Teachers take the time to put in the work to educate themselves. Many of us have done

student loans to do it. Now, statistically speaking, we can't afford a house based on our

salary. Why would anyone do it?

Theme 3: Increase respect for education in the African American community. The

teaching profession was once the gateway for African Americans to make it into the middle

class. The field of teaching has lost its luster due to the decrease of African American teachers

and the racial inequalities people have encountered in the public school setting. Participants in

this study recognize the disconnect between the community and the lack of respectability for the

profession of teaching, and the dwindling numbers of African Americans willingly entering the

field. Participant 04 articulated:

> If you want to increase the number of African American teachers, we must begin in our
>
> communities. We have to do the work there first because our communities can become
>
> our own worst enemies; we must get community buy-in. We must motivate them to
>
> invest in education again, become stakeholders, and then and only then will we increase
>
> the numbers of African American teachers.

Participant 03 communicated:

> Many Blacks have had bad experiences in school, and they pass those on to their kids.
>
> So we must make students' experience more enjoyable at school so they will come back
>
> into education.

Participant 01 shared:

> I remember when many of our teachers were in our local churches to intercede on behalf
>
> of families. We need to go back to that; as a community, we need to start holding
>
> community forums where we are informing and acknowledging to our families and

communities that we know that practices in schools have not always been equitable.

Once we do that, we can build the capacity of parents to confront these inequities

constructively, changing the negative perceptions of education; when we do that, we can

shift the paradigm, making the field more attractive for future Black educators.

Participant 08 replied:

I don't think it's much respect for education. You have people involved in the politics

and decision-making about education that are non-educators, and it's unfair. Non-

educators are participating in creating curriculum, testing mandates, and policies for

teachers; I think it's an opportunity for people to have their names on something; this

takes away from the authenticity of teaching practice and makes it a less attractive

profession. As educators, especially Black educators, our voice needs to be heard

because the kids and our communities need to see themselves in front to know they can

do great things. So, we must be part of every aspect as it relates to education.

Evaluation of Findings

The first research question (What obstacles have impacted African American teachers'

desire to enter into, remain in, or leave the teaching profession?) correlates with Kelly's (2007)

adaptation of Kanter's theory of tokenism, with which Kelly describes African American

teachers' marginalization in the teaching profession. Obstacles that contribute to the

marginalization process include performance pressures, boundary heightening, and role

entrapment (Kanter, 1977). Two themes emerged to answer the first research question: (a)

placement of African American teachers in high-needs schools, and (b) lack of respect for

African American teachers from parents and peers. This study reveals that African American

teachers entering the teaching profession experience tokenism due to current and historical

factors. The impact of tokenism can result in burnout and African American teachers exiting the teaching pipeline.

The first theme in this study—placement of African American teachers in high-needs schools—is supported by Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, and Freitas (2010) and Darling-Hammond. They found that job dissatisfaction of African American teachers working in high-needs schools contributes to higher turnover rates. Teachers who experience job dissatisfaction leave the field within 5 years. Other studies suggest that African American teachers are more likely than other teachers to work in schools that serve low-income or African American students (Griffin & Tackie, 2017).

The second theme in this study—lack of respect for African American teachers from parents and peers—is closely aligned with the findings of Griffin and Tackie (2017). In their research, many African American teachers shared their experiences of being pigeonholed by their work peers, administrators, and the community in which they worked. These teachers also expressed that they were perceived as unqualified by their teaching peers, who thought they were suitable for African American students but lacked knowledge and expertise and were not qualified to teach all students. While many African American teachers deserve praise for their accomplishments, instead they receive negative responses due to their achievements.

The second research question (What motivates African American teachers to remain in the teaching profession?), also relates to the findings of Griffin and Tackie (2017). Three themes emerged to address the second research question: (a) generations of teaching, (b) being the difference, and (c) students. The results of this study indicate that although African American teachers are frustrated, they persist because of their love for teaching students.

The first theme—generations of teaching—correlates with Tia C. Madkins' (2011) literature review of historical and contemporary trends. The profession of teaching was once a way for African Americans to enter the middle class. Teaching was a multi-generational tradition that many African Americans practiced. Today, many African Americans have maintained this legacy and still uphold the belief that "the mission of teaching is to uplift members of the race" (Morris, 2004).

The second theme—being the difference—is supported by the work of Madkins (2011) and Griffin and Tackie (2017). Since African Americans received their freedom, they have strived to shine the light on the importance of education. African Americans used teaching as a platform to educate and elevate. They knew the importance of providing the tools for success. Being the difference and standing in the gap was their way of giving back to the Black community. Holding high expectations for African American students is a source of empowerment that pushes them and challenges them to be the best they can be.

The third theme—finding motivation in students' success—is supported by Griffin and Tackie (2017), who found that African American teachers' passion for teaching comes from their desire to contribute to the success of all students, not just African American students. In addition to their love of teaching, African American teachers also desire to connect with African American students. They use cultural similarities and experiences to make these connections and make students more receptive to academic environments. Leveraging cultural similarities also allows African American teachers to be seen as role models, helping African American students to see themselves reflected in the future tense.

The third research question (What do current African American teachers think will increase the number of African American teachers entering the field?) correlated with two prior

research studies, namely Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) and Fiddiman, Campbell, and Partelow (2019). Increasing the number of African American teachers entering and remaining in the teaching pipeline will take intentional changes to how African American teachers are recruited and retained. Three themes surfaced to address the third research question: (a) salary, (b) loan forgiveness, and (c) respect for education in the African American community. The results of this study show that teachers feel underpaid and often not appreciated by those who understand them the most.

The first theme, salary, is supported by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017), who reported that wage is associated with the decreasing rates of African American teachers. The study revealed that teachers are not satisfied with their current level of wage, especially when considering all the additional responsibilities and training that come with the profession. Teachers are less likely to leave their districts when they are pleased with their salary and when it is comparable to those in non-teaching jobs.

The second theme, loan forgiveness, is also supported by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017). They found that one way to increase the number of African Americans entering the field of teaching would be to provide compensation packages comparable to those of other professionals with similar educational backgrounds. Fiddiman et al. (2019) found that student loan debt is a barrier for African American teachers and other teachers of color; it is estimated that teachers of color acquire $7,400.00 more student loan debt than White students. Having additional student loan debt makes it less likely for teachers of color to enter the teaching profession. The kinds of compensation packages outlined by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) would offer competitive salaries, scholarships, and loan forgiveness programs to reduce and offset student loan debt.

The third theme—respect for education in the African American community to increase the number of African American teachers entering the field—correlates with the work of Milner (2008), who believed that we must heal the connection between Black teachers, Black communities, and Black students. The evidence in this study confirms that the disconnect we are seeing in the Black community results from the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling, which diminished the visibility of Black teachers. To heal the connection, we must increase the visibility of the Black teachers for the sake of Black students and, in turn, heal our communities.

Summary

A general qualitative method was used to answer the research questions. Trustworthiness and credibility were established through transparency procedures. Credibility was established using eight of the three procedures outlined by Creswell and Poth (2017) to ensure validity: an explanation of researcher's bias, member checking, and detailed descriptions. The six steps of analyzing and interpreting data outlined by Creswell (2012) were utilized to determine the themes revealed during the coding process and organization of participants' interviews. After each interview, the interviews were imported into the Otter.ai program for transcription. Once transcribed, the researcher read the transcript for content, reread it line-by-line for data accuracy, and then compared it to the original recording. The transcript was then analyzed by hand, and pertinent content was noted on colored Post-it notes based on predetermined codes. The reintroduction of the findings is structured as follows: research question, theme, and the supportive category.

Seven themes emerged as a result of the data analysis process that addressed the study's research questions: a) placement of African American teachers in high-needs schools causes high

turn-over rates due to burn-out; (b) generations of teaching motivate African American teachers to enter the field of teaching; (c) students motivate African American teachers to persist in the teaching profession despite obstacles; (d) being the difference African American students and all students see; (e) an increase in teacher salaries will increase the motivation of African American teachers to enter into and remain in the teaching profession; (f) loan forgiveness will ease the financial barrier for African American teachers entering the field; and (g) increase respect for African American teachers in the African American community.

Previous studies regarding African American teachers' attrition support the themes and findings of the present study. All themes identified in the current study are supported by prior literature and provide insight into participants' experiences. The current study adds to the body of literature that addresses the declining numbers of African American teachers in public school settings by highlighting their obstacles, motivations, and participants' recommendations on how to increase the number of African American teachers entering and remaining in the teaching pipeline.

The two themes related to the first research question underscore how the obstacles that African American teachers face impact their desire to remain in the teaching profession. The three themes associated with the second research question outline African American teachers' main motivations to persist. The last three themes address the third research question, which provides us with African American teachers' recommendations on how to bring more African American teachers into the teaching pipeline. The researcher will provide further explanation of the results and recommendations in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The number of African American teachers in the public-school systems of the US is declining. This study addressed why these teachers, also known as "warm demanders", are slowly leaving public school settings (Griffin & Tackie, 2017). Their departure has profoundly impacted African American students and the communities they used to serve (Griffin & Tackie, 2017; Madkins, 2011). The interdependence of African American students on African American teachers has impacted the quality of education the students receive and the communities in which they reside (Milner, 2008). There are several factors which could influence the return of African American teachers to the classroom. These factors include wage increases, implementation of college-loan forgiveness programs, and increased respect from both the African American community and the general community would need to increase.

A qualitative method was employed to understand African American teachers' attitudes and experiences, and to understand their motivation to stay in teaching. They were also asked for advice on increasing the number of African American teachers entering the teaching pathway. The study results were discussed in Chapter 4, organized by themes found in the research.

One limitation of the study is the small sample size of 10 African American teachers. Eight were female and two were male. They taught various grade ranges and were from various locations in the United States. The researcher shares detailed accounts of the participants' experiences to ensure transferability and validity. The eight procedures outlined by Creswell and Poth (2017) were employed to develop credibility.

Researching the day-to-day work experiences for African American teachers may aid in understanding the obstacles met when addressing adverse working conditions. A clearer understanding of their experiences can be used to influence local school districts and other educational institutions in addressing issues and providing better support. This in turn could lead to increasing success in recruitment, and improved retention of African American teachers, thus addressing the core issue of African American teacher shortages.

This study pointed to monetary consideration and several other obstacles as affecting the decline of African American teachers in public school settings. These results parallel those reported in the current research literature. The participants' experiences reflect the challenges that many of them have encountered professionally and personally. The descriptions shed light on the obstacles they have encountered and may be used to affect how future African American teachers enter and remain in the teaching pathway.

Discussion of Findings

The study's results are best understood by comparing them to related research that has sought to understand factors related to the decline in the numbers of African American teachers. These factors are both internal and external. This study looked into work-related obstacles and motivations. It also solicited insights into recruiting, supporting, and retaining current and future African American teachers. The chapter's organization will summarize findings previously discussed in chapter 4, implications for practice, recommendations for research, and conclusions. Literature and the theoretical framework supported findings in the study.

The outcome of Research Question 1 (RQ1) suggests that African American teachers experience several obstacles that impact their desire to remain, or leave the teaching profession. Theme 1 revolved around placement in high-needs schools, because many felt their teaching

programs did not prepare them to support low-income students in Title 1 schools. According to

literature, poor working conditions are widespread in schools with disadvantaged student

populations, and the schools do not provide a supportive environment to teachers. The lack of

support accounts for a significant portion of such schools' high turnover rates (Achinstein et al.,

2010; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Stewart et al., 2007). In addition to the other challenges of

high-needs schools, teachers also struggled to find essential resources needed to support students.

Many participants said they lacked sufficient support from administration and district leadership

while they adjusted to their classroom environments.

  Theme 2 is centered around the lack of respect from parents and peers the participants

felt. They felt devalued by their peers and parents, and experienced acts of microaggression due

to their race. In an article written by Griffin and Tackie (2017), African American teachers

expressed their frustration of being pigeonholed by their coworkers, administrators, and the

community in which they worked. They also perceived that some of their teaching colleagues

felt they were inferior. There was evidence of the attitude among some that while they may be

qualified to teach African American children, they are unqualified to educate all students and

lack the necessary knowledge and experience. African American teachers said they were

frequently misunderstood as mediocre educators; this belief produces a subtle — and clearly

false — implication that African American teachers are incapable of teaching other children

(Griffin & Tackie, 2017). While many African American instructors deserve recognition for

their successes, they instead receive unfavorable feedback.

  Themes 3 and 4 focused on the teachers' motivations for remaining in the teaching

profession. Participants valued education and loved to teach. Some had parents or other loved

ones who had motivated them to enter and remain in the profession. Teaching used to be a way

for African Americans to break into the middle class, with many African Americans pursuing

teaching as a multi-generational tradition (Madkins, 2011). A number of participants reported

that they enjoyed the connections and relationships they built with students. Others' enthusiasm

for teaching stemmed from their desire to contribute to the success of all pupils, not just those of

color. Apart from their passion for teaching, African American teachers yearn to connect with

their African American students Griffin and Tackie (2017). Other participants taught because

they wanted to be an example for African American students, to show they could achieve

whatever goal they set (Theme 5). They recognized the critical nature of equipping students with

the necessary tools for success. Making a difference and bridging the divide was their way of

giving back to the African American community.

In regard to Research Question 3 (RQ3), the participants were asked how to increase the

number of African American teachers entering the profession. Participants felt that teachers are

not compensated adequately for their expertise and education (Theme 6). Research has shown

that certified teachers are 25% more likely to leave their schools due to dissatisfaction with their

salaries than other factors (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Another concern was

that salaries do not increase sufficiently to offset inflation in the cost of living. One suggestion

was that the government could offer more accessible loan-forgiveness programs for African

American teachers to counteract the financial burden of college loans (Theme 7). According to a

Brookings Institution report, Black college graduates owe $7,400 or more in student loan debt

than white graduates before earning their first dollar (Scott-Clayton & Li, 2016). Theme 8

expressed the desire for increased respect for education within the African American community.

In the past, teachers were seen as the center of the African American community (Milner, 2008).

However, teachers are now rare in African American, and parents and students no longer value

nor trust the public education system to work in their best interest (Milner, 2008). Reflecting on the response from participant 02, "Many parents carry negative experiences from their childhood into their children's education. So, when problems arise with students, not only are you trying to formulate positive relationships with students, but you often have to try and repair old stuff that happened with the parents in the same district."

Implications for Practice

This study focused on perceived needs to increase teacher retention by exposing the obstacles African American teachers encounter in public school settings and as a teaching professional. The results have practical implications for preparation programs, and for the operations and policies of school districts. The implementation of CRT in this study gives voice to the unrepresented who are trying to enter, who have left, are planning to exit, or are currently working in public schools. The conclusions offered in this research, together with the collective voice of study participants, may guide school districts, administrators, and teacher preparation programs (TPP's), looking to recruit, support, and retain African American teachers.

African American candidates encounter several barriers such as financial difficulties, lack of preparedness, connecting to pedagogy, racial discrimination. One identified barrier expressed by participants in this study was placement in high needs schools. One participant expressed "I don't think programs prepare you for all public-school settings. They prepare you for the "model" public schools, not the low-income ones. I wasn't prepared to work in inner city schools." Research shows that more teachers of color work in high needs schools at higher rates than their white counterparts and experience unsupportive work conditions (Achinstein et al., 2010). It is imperative that TPPs better equip African American teachers and all teachers to work in and with students from high needs schools.

Although a substantial portion of African American teachers enter the profession through alternative certification programs, several participants in this study entered as preservice teachers through teacher preparation programs. Teacher preparation determines the teachers' longevity in the field (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Similarly, insufficient teacher preparation may result in ineffective instructors, lowering teachers' efficacy and motivation to continue in classrooms, and, most significantly, having a detrimental influence on classroom teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998). In a study conducted by Farinde-Wu, Griffen, and Young (2012), African American female teachers reported that their teacher education programs (traditional and alternative) did not adequately prepare them for their classroom teaching roles, thus resulting in an alteration of their plans to continue in K12 classrooms.

Teacher preparation programs need to ensure that preservice teachers are ready to work with underserved populations in high needs schools. Participants in this study expressed the feelings of inadequacy when working with "needy students." Teacher preparation programs can better serve preservice teachers by requiring them to spend time student teaching in high needs schools with knowledgeable mentors. This will allow them to observe how their mentors navigate emotionally charged situations to see real world examples and appropriate classroom applications.

The participants in this study reported that one of the greatest obstacles to working effectively with underserved student populations was a lack of administrative support. Administrators play a critical role in the day-to-day success of their respective schools. They are responsible for setting and enforcing school budgets, influencing school culture and climate, and managing students and staff. Understanding the substantial influence that school administrators have on school staff is crucial to understanding teacher retention and school working conditions

(Boyd et al., 2011). Support for African American teachers from administrators can come in many forms such as access to resources and training or affirmation and acknowledgement. One participant shared, "My administrator failed to acknowledge me publicly and privately, but she recognized and celebrated my white colleague. So, a lot of times I didn't feel comfortable enough to ask for help." Administrators set the tone for teachers, staff, students, and parents. They must be committed to creating and maintaining positive school cultures and climate to create systems of support and inclusion for African American teachers.

Hopper, Robinson, and Fitchett (2021) article shares, inclusive environments begin with school culture. School culture and climates play an essential role in the acclimation of incoming African American teachers. The culture should be inclusive and celebratory of the diversity of the teachers and students. Administrators can do this by recognizing and affirming African American teachers by hearing them out, involving them in the decision-making process, and creating spaces that make them feel safe and valued. Administrators should also invest in the culture of learning by making professional development available for those that want to increase their professional depth. Approaching leadership from these perspectives enables a leader to respond more quickly to the various dynamic components in urban educational environments. As leaders, school climate and culture set the tone for learning, help define the school's character, and are critical to students' and teachers' impressions of the school environment (Hopper et al., 2021). When creating systems of inclusion, it can increase African American teachers desire to enter and remain in the public school system.

Motivation to continue and persist in the field of education has been a struggle that many generations of African American teachers have faced (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Understanding the complexities of racism many African American teachers leveraged their comfort and safety

in an attempt to do what they loved (Madkins, 2011). One participant shared, "I come from a long line of educators. When we talk about history, my parents went to segregated schools. When schools integrated, they refused to bus Black students. My grandfather converted a public truck and made it a school bus to bus Black students to school. Education is important to us." Education can be seen as a form or protest to those whom it was once denied. Today African American teachers that have persisted teach for the love of students, and embrace their place as role models, mentors, and inspirations (Carrol, 2017).

The practice of ensuring equal access to opportunities and resources for African American teachers who have historically been excluded or marginalized is critical to the academic well-being of African American students (Milner, 2008). Researchers have found that African American students allocated to at least one African American teacher in grades K-3 are 13% more likely to graduate from high school and 6% more likely to enroll in college than their same-school, same-race classmates (Gershenson et al., 2017). Because of the importance and advantages of same-race teachers, it is essential that we increase the numbers of African American teachers entering and remaining in the teaching pipeline.

When participants of this study were asked what would boost the number of African American teachers joining the industry, current African American teachers responded: money. The average starting salary for African American teachers is $45,813. However, this does not account for the cost of living differences prevalent in cities with a high concentration of African American teachers, nor does it account for the comparability of teacher wages with those of other professions requiring similar hours and education (California Department of Education, 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). African American teachers are twice as likely to work in high-poverty, high-minority schools, which when confronted with extra difficulties that

may lead to salary dissatisfaction (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). In an effort to recruit more African American teachers, districts need to increase the number of teachers' base pay. To retain more African American teachers in the state of Colorado, the state has partnered with the Sachs Foundation to supplement the salaries of African American teachers. While just 1.7 percent of teachers in Colorado are African American, African American students make up 4.2 percent of the student population. For the first three years of a participating teacher's career, the foundation will boost their salaries up to an additional $20,000 yearly: $10,000 via a stipend and another $10,000 if instructors agree to act as Sachs mentors. Additionally, the foundation will provide free professional development and classroom materials, for which instructors often have to pay out-of-pocket (Walker, 2018). The intentional recruitment and maintenance of African American teachers benefit African American students and all student populations (Hines & Fallace, 2022).

Recommendation for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study more qualitative research should be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of pay increases or stipends to increase the number of African American teachers entering the teaching workforce. With teachers bringing home an average of $45,813 annually, which is less than other professions with the same educational background, many African Americans are choosing to enter more lucrative fields. Districts may look at Colorado's model as an option for recruiting more African American teachers.

Secondly, further research is needed to explore other ways to grow the number of African American teachers in school systems. For example, studies should be conducted to understand if Grow Your Own programs (GYO) being implemented in high schools are effectively adding to the numbers of teachers entering and remaining in the teaching profession. Organizations such

as Educators Rising and Recruiting Washington Teachers (RWT) have existing programs geared toward the recruitment of high school students. Understanding the effectiveness of these programs could be a solution to increase the number of African American students choosing teaching as a profession.

Lastly, it would be helpful to understand how racial affinity groups can enhance the effectiveness of inclusive environments for African American teachers. A racial affinity group is a group of people who share the same race and wish to connect and support each other. African American teachers and other teachers of color encounter a range of challenges that impact their ability to thrive. As a result of systematic racism and its pervasiveness in society, public schools in the United States need to commit to assisting educators of color (Great Schools Partnership, 2022). Affinity groups provide safe spaces where individuals can develop through training, receive support, have same-race mentors, and learn about leadership pathways.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the reasons behind the continuing decline in the number of African American teachers in public school settings through a qualitative analysis of interviews with such teachers. The lived experiences of the study participants as well as historical variables and perspectives shed light on the reasons that have contributed to the declining numbers of African American teachers. The analyses disclosed common themes in the challenges and barriers that these African American instructors face in the teaching profession. The research addressed many barriers, including placement in high-needs schools. The study's participants and the literature found that TPP training does not always provide African American teachers with the requisite abilities to operate in high-need areas. TPPs must work harder to

ensure that pre-service teachers get training with competent and qualified teacher mentors in high-needs schools.

The second research question addressed what motivated African American teachers to remain in the teaching profession. Participants in this study shared that they are motivated to persist in the profession for several reasons; the first reason for persistence comes from generations of teaching. Some participants shared that their parents or other family members were educators, and their love for teaching stems from growing up watching their dedication. Secondly, African American teachers teach for the love of students, and many African American teachers enjoy interacting and connecting with students. Lastly, African American teachers persist as a form of resistance to be the change they want to see. Some participants shared that they stay because they understand the importance of African American students seeing themselves in front as leaders and educators. Although intrinsic motivation inspires them to persist, additional support from administrators and staff through the creation of inclusive environments would benefit not only African American teachers but all teachers and students.

The last research question asked what can be done to increase the number of African American teachers entering the teaching profession. Participants shared that monetary increases would encourage more African American teachers to enter the profession. Loan forgiveness programs would also be beneficial to aid in the reduction of debt that many African American teachers acquire. Districts looking to increase the number of African American teachers can explore salary increases or stipend programs to attract and retain this much-needed population.

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APPENDIX A: DISTRICT CONSENT FORM

Dear: Mr. Howard,

I am writing in hopes of approval for the participation of African American teachers within your district, for a study looking at the high attrition rates of African American teachers in public school systems. In previous conversations, we've discussed the increasing need for African American teachers within our district. Your consent will allow me to reach out to African American teachers, within our district, to gain better insight about their teaching journeys which may illuminate areas of celebration or concern for this dwindling population of teachers.

The purpose of this study is to understand what is behind the decline of African American teachers in public school systems. The name of the district and teachers will be kept confidential in the study results. There are no known risks associated with the district or teachers that choose to participate. The anticipated benefits could improve the way African American teachers are recruited, supported, and retained. The retention of African American teachers is not only beneficial to African American students but all students.

This study will be reviewed and approved by the University of the Pacific Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding the study. I would be happy to go into more detail regarding the context of the study. I am currently looking to interview five teachers from varying sites that have two or more years of teaching experience.

Thank you in advance,

Catherine Lewis
Doctoral Candidate Education & Organization Leadership
University of the Pacific Sacramento Campus
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APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

Dear African American Educator,

My name is Catherine Lewis, I'm currently a special education teacher and doctoral student at the University of the Pacific in Sacramento CA. I am reaching out to you, in hopes of your participation in a research study regarding the high attrition rates of African American teachers. The purpose of this study is to understand the day to day experiences of African American teachers, that may illuminate what is behind the decline of African American teachers in today's public school systems.

Participation in this study is voluntary and no compensation will be given. If you choose to participate, and you experience stress or anxiety while participating you may withdraw at any point, no questions asked. Each participant will undergo two interviews via zoom (or other online platform), or in person that will last 30 to 60 minutes in duration which will be collected based on availability. The information collected will be used for research to be published in my dissertation for my doctoral studies. Confidentiality will be maintained and all identifiers of all participants will not be divulged. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain ambiguity.

The criteria for participation are as follows:
1. You must be African American.
2. You must be a K-12 teacher.
3. You must work in the district of inquiry.
4. You must have at least 2 years of teaching experience.

If you feel you qualify to participate in this study and would like to volunteer, please complete, sign, and return this letter of consent. You may contact me via phone at (209) 649-0976 or via email at c_lewis3@u.pacific.edu to arrange collection of this document.

I have read the above information and consent to participate in the study.

Participant Signature _____
Researcher Signature _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW (1)

1. What city and state are you from?

2. Growing up, what was your socioeconomic status?

3. Did you attend public schools?

4. Growing up did you have an African American teacher and did they influence your life, and if so in what way?

5. What was your favorite subject in school?

6. Did you have a favorite teacher? Why? What memorable lessons did they teach you?

7. What was your greatest source of support growing up? Please explain.

8. As an adult do you have the same support system?

9. When did you know you wanted to be an educator?

10. Was your interest in becoming an educator influenced by someone or an experience?

11. When you went to college was teaching your intended career pathway?

12. Did you work in the education field in any other capacity before becoming a teacher?

13. Is anyone else in your family a teacher?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW (2)

1. What grade level do you currently teach?

2. Did you take the traditional teaching pathway or nontraditional pathway?

3. Were teacher licensure exams a barrier for you, if yes how so?

4. What was your experience in the Teacher Preparation Program?

5. Did TPP prepare you for teaching in today's public school system?

6. Was your TPP mentor knowledgeable and helpful?

7. Do you feel your background affected your efforts to become a teacher?

8. What obstacles do you believe you have experienced in your current position? Please explain? Do you feel they are attributed to your Race?

9. What is your current level of support?

10. What supports do you wish you had and from whom?

11. Do you regularly plan or interact with other teachers on the campus?

12. Are the administrators or instructional coaches on your campus helpful to you?

13. Do you feel isolated at your current school site? Is it self-inflicted? If so why?

14. Do you feel voiceless as an African American teacher?

15. What has been your greatest resource as an African American teacher?

16. Do you find support within other African American staff on your campus, or in your district?

17. What are important qualities for African American teachers to have?

18. What do you think is behind the declining rates of African American teachers in today's public school systems?

19. What do you think needs to change to bring more teachers into the field of teaching?

20. What additional supports do you recommend for incoming African American teachers?