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Lived Experiences of African American Middle School Males Taught by a Different Race

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Pamela Lee Ward

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

While considerable research has explored the effect of teacher's racial group on educating African American students from the teacher's perspective, little is known about the students' thoughts. The purpose of this study was to describe the feelings of African American middle school males who were taught by teachers of a different race. The bases for this qualitative study were critical race theory (CRT) and oppositional cultural theory (OCT). Purposive sampling strategy and snowball sampling were used to recruit seven African American middle school males for in depth semi structured interviews. The responses of the participants were coded, the analysis method of moving from the condensed meaning unit into themes was used. Participants' comments were summarized to establish trustworthiness and rich thick detailed descriptions. The results indicated that participants wanted teachers of a different race to be aware of their personal biases, participants wanted better teacher- student relationships, and for teachers to understand cultural learning styles, and believed that boys would get more attention if girls and boys were taught separately. The results of this study could lead to positive social change by helping administrators, teachers, and support staff to bridge the equity gap in middle schools.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation research to my mother Geneva Ward. I cannot fully express in words just how important your support has meant to me during this lengthy process, but Abraham Lincoln expresses my thoughts fully by saying, "All that I am, or ever hope to be, I owe to my 'Angel' Mother." Without your daily encouragement and prayers, I could not have made it to this point of completion. The journey was long, but with God's help, together, we did it!

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Lastly, the late Dr. Myles Monroe says, "The most powerful thing you can give in life is a word." I would like to close with a powerful word for you, the next generation. My little cousins, from the family lineage of the Aikens, Sumner, Boyd, and Stevens, families, this is not about my current accomplishment, but it is for a greater purpose. For

the lineage, our family unit sacrificed throughout the years. Those who came on slave ships, who endured and survived so we could see this day! In your daily walk, you must never forget with God you can do all things (Philippians 4:13), because you have seeds of greatness in your DNA! Honor God by living up to what you are called to be! Believe big and watch your dreams manifest into reality! It's our time to create generational success! This begins with you, the next generation!

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Across the United States, there is an educational crisis among African American middle school males who are not learning at the same rate as their European American peers (Kimmel, 2000; Lynch, 2017). African American males are not receiving the most effective educational opportunities to suit their learning styles (Irvine & Armento, 2001). For example, due to this mismatch, they are being placed in special education classes because of their lack of social skills and their misbehavior is construed as serious academic problems by educators (Lynch, 2017; Scott Foundation, 2010).

Most of the focus of recent research has been on the shortcomings of the educational plight of African American males (Jackson & Moore, 2008). For over 60 years, researchers have studied, and policymakers have discussed the educational shortcomings of minority students (Gardner et al., 2014). Specifically, the focus has been on the quality of education received to equip African American males for graduation (Gardner & Miranda, 2001; Skiba et al., 2011). Despite this national urgency of keeping African American male students in school and graduating, they continue to fall behind their European American peers academically and are not learning at their full potential (Davis, 2003). Researchers consistently show that African American males are more likely to underperform academically (DeValenzuela et al., 2006; Paul, 2004).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2019) indicated that twelfth grade African American male students read at approximately the same level as European American eighth-graders. For decades

(1992- 2017) European American eighth-graders scored higher than their peers. Specifically, in 2017 reading scores for eighth grade European Americans scored 275, while African Americans scored 249, Latinos 255, Asian/Pacific Islanders 282, American Indian/ Alaska Native 253, and students who have English as a second language scored significantly lower than all other groups with a score of 226. Only two years later, in 2019, the reading scores of all groups decreased by several points. For example, in 2019 European Americans scored 272 in reading, African Americans 244, Latinos scored 252, Asian / Pacific Islanders was the only group that had no significant change, while American Indian/ Alaska Native decreased in reading scores by 5, with a score of 248 (The National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Researchers have posited several possible causes of the educational dilemmas of African American middle school males. Possible causes include: (a) transitioning to middle school (transition trauma); (b) underachievement; (c) overrepresentation in special education, fueled by increased school suspensions, dropout rates; (d) negative media representation. (e) Racial mismatch, which is a challenge that may occur when there is a difference in race / ethnicity between the teacher and student (Bailey et al., 2015; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Sparks, 2015). Racial mismatch occurs when most of the student population are of a different race or ethnicity than the teacher (Mueller et al., 1999). While most teachers can help students learn, factors such as students' confidence in the teacher and the teacher's perception of the student are crucial in addressing learning outcomes (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010).

Egalite et al. (2015) has reported the teachers' perspectives concerning the educational experiences of minority students but have failed to examine how diverse students perceive and feel about their mismatched teachers. Given the academic dilemma facing African American males, considerable attention may be needed to alleviate the current conditions. The existing research has focused on the teacher's perception; the present study examined the point of view of African American middle school male students when teacher mismatch exists. Students' perspectives presented a personal look into students' unique educational experiences and feelings when teacher mismatch exists. The potential social implications of the study are designed to help educators gain insight to assist African American middle school males' academic success (outcomes).

Chapter 1 is organized into the following sections: (a) background, (b) problem statement, (c) purpose of the study, (d) research questions, (e) theoretical framework, (f) nature of the study, (g) definitions, (h) assumptions, (i) scope and delimitations, (j) limitations, and (k) significance of the study.

Background

The Student-Teacher Diversity Gap

In 2018 the United States witnessed a change in the population. Children of color, which include anyone not considered European Americans, age 18 and younger, now represent the majority of the school population (Frey, 2014; Jackson, 2006). Thus, the state-by-state diversity gap between teachers and students continues to increase. More than any other time in the United States history, individuals who are not of the same racial or cultural background tend to be teaching African American male students (Lewis,

2006; U. S. Department of Education, 2004; Saffold, 2007). For example, students of color represent 51% of students in the public-school system, while 80% of the teacher workforce are European American (California Department of Education, 2018; Lewis, 2006; Saffold, 2007; U. S. Department of Education, 2004). As a result, 40% of schools in the United States do not have teachers of color in the classroom (the National Collaborative, 2004). Therefore, students do not look like their teachers in some school districts (Ahmad, & Ulrich, 2014).

African Americans represent the majority 52% in urban schools, although only 8% of the teachers are African American, and 80% of educators are European American (Ahmad, & Ulrich, 2014). As a result, the percentage of teachers of color does not approximate the percentage of students of color in any state, notwithstanding sizable, diverse populations such as Hawaii and the District of Columbia (D.C; Ahmad, & Ulrich, 2014). Hence, the higher the percentage of students of color, the greater the disparity of teachers of color (Ahmad, & Ulrich, 2014). These points were further emphasized by Toldson (2011) who analyzed the American Community Survey (ACS) data and found that African American males make up approximately 7.39% of the public-school student population, while African American male teachers make up a mere 1.81% of the teacher workforce. The more significant percentage of teachers are European American female teachers who make up 63% of all United States teacher force, followed by 16% European American male teachers, 7.74% African American females, and 5.81% represented by Latino teachers (Toldson, 2011). Based on these statistics, it is more likely that African

American males are educated by European American female teachers than males or females of color.

Studies that address low academic success among African American middle school males consistently point to racial mismatching as a potential problem (Grady and Reynolds, 2012). Researchers show that same race teachers and teachers of similar backgrounds increase academic achievement (Milner, 2006; Gershenson et al., 2017; Papageorge et al., 2016). When teachers of similar backgrounds are paired racially, students achieve more academically (Downer et al. (2016). Higher standards are implemented, and academic success tends to follow (Ahmad, & Ulrich, 2014). Also, there are related implications in the findings of McGrady and Reynolds (2013), who examined African American male students aged 11-14; the authors suggested the students are more likely to learn if non-European American teachers educate them. Most noticeably, Gershenson et al. (2017) suggested that African American students matched with the same race teacher perform better academically.

A large body of literature has addressed issues in academic shortcomings of African American middle school males related to the teacher's perception of why they persistently underperform. Few investigations have evaluated the student's perspectives or opinions. My research study is distinctive because it addresses the perceptions of African American middle school males' educational experiences and academic outcomes. Findings of earlier studies generally focus on the educational experiences of African American males from the teacher's perceptions. Due to the disproportionate dropout rate, the participants are usually high school students (Alexander et al., 1987). The middle

school participants from my study have an opportunity to share their point of view by answering 15 standardized open-ended questions.

Accumulating research indicates that when a racial mismatch exists, the lack of cultural expectation can also exist, furthering lower academics, causing psychological discomfort, and increasing academic disengagement with the teacher of a different race (Banks & Banks, 1993; Gay, 1994, 1997; Payne, 1995; Pollack, 1998). Ladson-Billings (2001) suggested that students of color may feel they have to dismiss their cultural views and embrace another. As a result, students feel alienated from their school experience, creating a distorted view due to unfair school experiences.

Grady and Reynolds (2012) added that racial mismatch has been given minimal attention and is the topic of the present study; the study also explored factors that impact the achievement gap when African American middle school males experience mismatch. Bell (2009, 2010) conveyed the importance of fostering positive experiences, valuing African American male students' contributions, to keep them engaged in school. Based on the results of interviews with participants in my study I provided a clearer understanding of the participants' experiences. The contributions of the participants may narrow the educational gap and aid educators in developing positive relationships in the classroom.

The Gap in Knowledge

To fill the gap in knowledge is concerning African American males' perspectives of being taught by teachers of a different race, it is imperative to examine the academic lived experiences of African American middle school males who are taught by teachers

of a different race. To this date, most research on the educational disparity among African American middle school males has rarely involved the direct focus and concerns of the students' academic perception when a racial mismatch exists. Prior research has relied on the interactions between the teacher and students from the perspective of the classroom teacher's perspective. No significant changes have been made in the literature, documenting the continual failure to educate African American males in the public-school system. Differences in the perception between teacher and student are due to differences in community, gender, and race. This gap between the teacher and student can negate communication and social interaction (Warren, 2010a).

The knowledge gap also addressed the role of cultural identity in the classroom. Cultural identity plays a significant part in the academic success of African American male students. For example, a learner's difference in cultural identity (whom the individual feels they can relate to on an ethnic, racial, social, and socioeconomic level) can cause a cultural disconnect with mismatch teachers (Altugan, 2015). As a result, a disconnect to the teacher may lead to low motivation to learn. Considering the student's cultural identity is significant in promoting an excitement to learn (Altugan, 2015). Cultural identity has had an impact on the success of students. Going beyond the classroom and considering the knowledge that students are learning beyond the classroom, such as their identity as an African American male, is essential. Previous research has devoted more attention to the impact of the teacher's point of view on academic outcomes upon African American males. This research study is unique in that it shared the educational perceptions of African American middle school males. The results

of 15 open-ended interview questions can aid educators and programs in narrowing the educational gap, by understanding the student's viewpoint.

In the present study I examined the opinions of African American middle school male participants. The perspectives of the participants may have the potential to help mismatch educators, administrators, and support staff diminish the educational gap between African American males and their peers. Each participant was asked 15 interview questions to determine their perspective on factors that impact their experiences in middle school.

The participants' educational experience and cultural knowledge can contribute to social change to improve the academic outcome. By connecting what they know (cultural identity) and experiences in the classroom, the results can help educators improve outcomes for African American males in their classroom.

Problem Statement

African American males are more likely to fall behind in all academic proficiency levels than their European American peers (Bowman et al., 2018; Rausch & Skiba, 2004; Roach, 2004). William (2015) discussed the problem of academic disparity of African American males and their peers. Toppo (2016) revealed that 60% of African American males will earn a high school diploma, and approximately four in ten will drop out before the completion of high school, versus 80% graduation rate of European American male students (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015; Orfield, 2004).

In the United States, minority students make up the majority in public schools. However, European American teachers comprise more than 80% of the teaching force

(Rich, 2015). For instance, in Boston, only one Latino teacher is represented for every 52 Latino students. Also, there is one African American teacher for every 22 African American students. In contrast, the ratio of European American teachers is one to less than three. In large cities like New York, minority students represent more than 85%, while 60% of teachers are European Americans (Rich, 2015). In Durham public schools (DPS) there are 34 % of teachers with a minority background. Whereas the national average for minority teachers in the workplace is less than 20%. The disproportionate rate of minority students and teaching staff is problematic because it may impact academic performance, suggested a Johns Hopkins University study (Rosen, 2015).

Even though the effects are small, the link between academic performance and students being taught by a teacher of their race, was evident (Egalite et al., 2015). Egalite et al.'s (2015) study suggested when European American teachers and African American teachers examined African American students, the European American teachers were about 40% less likely to expect the same student to graduate from high school. Milner (2006) suggested that European American teachers' perception that minority students do not possess the skills to succeed (deficit thinking) impacted academic performance. In addition to deficit thinking, was the lack of teacher/ student relationships. A lack of teacher-student perceptions may contribute to stereotypes and prejudices due to media exposure (Morris 2005; Staiger 2004; Tyson 2003).

Furthermore, a more diverse teaching population could encourage greater academic success (Rosen, 2016). Dee and Wyckoff (2015) added if there are no people who mirror the student and family then this might be a problem, because when students

see someone at the whiteboard who looks like them, it may help them to know they can achieve success also (Stanford Graduate School of Education, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

It is the purpose of the present qualitative study to capture the educational experiences, and share the voices of African American middle school males taught by educators of a different race. In this study, I examined the varied untold educational experiences of African American middle school males who attended a public school who were taught by teachers of a different race.

Preliminary evidence implied chronic racial inequalities in elementary, middle, and high school (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). Further scholarly evidence showed that European American educators evaluated African American students' academics and behavior more negatively than that of their counterparts (Alexander et al., 1987; Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Ehrenberg et al., 1995; Morris, 2005; Sbarra, & Pianta, 2001). However, there remained a gap in the literature as to the students' educational experiences and perceptions of having teachers of the same and different race. This study included an aspect that has not been heard in prior research, that of the African American student's perception and voice, whereas in previous studies the focus has been on the failed graduation rate. Thus, high school males have been the participants in previous studies, whereas un the current study middle school males shared their perspectives by answering 15 interview questions. Lastly, the study examined if racial mismatch had any effect on achievement, the cultural meaning of behavior, and the students' opinions.

Research Question

RQ1-Qualitative: What is the lived academic experience of middle school African American males when taught by teachers of different races?

Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework that supported the current basic qualitative study is critical race theory (CRT). Specifically, critical race theory was employed to help understand the effects race has on the educational experiences of African American middle school male students' and the barriers African American male students experience daily (Howard & Navarro, 2016). The major foundation of critical race theory concentrated on the elimination of racism in American society. A basic assumption pertinent to the study of colorblindness is that the United States had been a colorblind society. CRT rejects colorblind meritocracy and calls for a more aggressive way to bring forth color consciousness into the thinking of America instead (Barlow, 2016). Wingfield added (2015) explicit racism has taken the form of colorblindness. For example, if an individual believes they do not see color or acknowledge they do not see race, can contribute to the continued persistence of discrimination. Instead, he urged European Americans to become color conscious instead (Wingfield, 2015). Among current trends in the study of colorblindness provides some insight into the reality that ignoring racial groups can lead to the misrepresentation of reality. In addition, the color of a student's skin can affect (the unconscious biases) a teacher and can hinder a student's academic progress (Castro-Atwater, 2016). Gotanda (1991) added a different viewpoint by adding that American society has been a society that is color conscious rather than color blind.

The color line divides groups to distinguish dominance (Banks, 1995). Therefore, the use of critical race theory to address racial microaggressions is important in addressing racial inequality in the classroom. Racial microaggressions are the everyday slights, indignities, put-downs and insults delivered to target groups (people of color, women, LGBT population) or those who are marginalized experience in their day-to-day interactions (Sue, 2010). For instance, in the classroom, a microaggressions can be the singling out of students in class because of their backgrounds or the continuation of mispronouncing a student's name after acknowledging the proper way to say their name. The literature on African American middle school males' educational disparity suggested that many factors are associated with increased dropout rates before high school graduation (Anyon et al., 2017). For example, teachers' perceptions of students' behavior in areas where teachers have weaker relationships with students (hallways and bathrooms) leads to increased out of school suspensions and the likelihood of fewer high school graduations (Anyon et al., 2017).

Given critical race theory's (CRT) commitment to social change to eliminate all forms of racism and inequality in the classroom, it is critical to utilize it as a valuable tool to determine if racial mismatch affects the academic success among students of color. A theoretical assumption that should be addressed is the deficit thinking of teachers' who assume, that students of color do not possess the skills, knowledge, or attitude necessary to result in success academically (Milner, 2006). Several scholars have reported deficit thinking by teachers of another race. Researchers (Hale, 2001; Milner, 2006; Thompson,

2004) have suggested that this type of thinking was one of the most powerful forces against students of color.

Through the lens of critical race theory (CRT) is the commitment to examine curriculum, instruction, assessment, and desegregation in education. In addition, CRT presents a clear explanation of the connection between teachers' racism and their teaching beliefs based in their own cultural background (Sleeter, 2017). CRT and the teacher/ student relationship between African American middle school males taught by teachers of a different race and the impact it has academically is crucial to the curent research because of the existence of the growing numbers of minority students per European American teachers. In addition to having teachers of a different race, Delgado (1995b) suggested that the ultimate effectiveness of academic success existed in the stories of African American male students.

CRT relies on storytelling as its main tenet (Delgado, 1989). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) clarified that counter-storytelling is a form of telling stories that are not often told. The rarity of African American middle school boys sharing their experiences and perceptions have the power to put a human face on the challenge minorities face academically. The perspectives of African American middle school males can destroy negative outlooks while changing negative societal mindsets about African American boys presented in the media. Thus, the voices of people of color are essential for a complete analysis of the educational system to understand how they are affected (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In this respect, Lynn and Parker (2006) suggested that critical

race theory scholars explore the connections between students of color and their schooling experience.

Delgado (1995b) suggested Bell's CRT asserted that race and the meanings attached to race are socially constructed and cannot be ignored as a powerful aspect of human social life (Berry, 2005; Delgado, 1995b, & Henfield, 2006). This theoretical approach is useful for theorizing and examining how race and the meanings attached to race influence the educational context for students of color (Henfield, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Bell's research approach incorporates storytelling or personal narratives, which is useful in qualitative research design (Delgado, 1995a). Using CRT as a major framework allowed the participants to voice their concerns, particularly those related to race and race relations, on why African American youths progress when they were taught by teachers who share the same race.

In addition to CRT, Oppositional Cultural Theory (OCT) exemplified by Ogbu (1991) argued that certain minorities recognize the social injustices and lack of opportunities and engage in oppositional behaviors, which can translate into becoming anti-achievement oriented. OCT was useful in understanding the resistance that students of another race may show towards the teacher and learning. Irving and Hudley (2008) reveal a positive relationship between cultural mistrust and oppositional cultural attitudes. Irving and Hudley (2008) further indicated that cultural mistrust is a significant predictor of academic achievement also called academic disidentification. Academic disidentification revealed that over time African American males were more likely to devalue academics as a protective mechanism (Steele, 1992). For example, when

academic disidentification was present, a student may begin to view his academic ability compared to his peers. Thus, a student's perception can correlate to the academic outcomes (Cokley, 2002; Cokley et al., 2012). In addition to academic disidentification, mistrust increases, academic outcome expectations decrease. As mistrust increases, oppositional cultural attitudes also increase (Irving & Hudley, 2008). Oppositional cultural attitudes clearly undermine educational expectations. Counteracting this resistance can occur by educating and training teachers to teach African American male students. A closer inspection of these assumptions is explained in Chapter 2.

The present qualitative study examined the opinions of African American middle school male students on academic success when mismatch exists. Even though the topic of gender is not explicitly addressed, it is important to note that same-gender teachers significantly improve the achievement of boys and teacher perceptions of student performance (Dee, 2005). Therefore, assigning same-gender teachers can produce positive outcomes (Dee, 2005). Further, the study's results of Lavy (2004) indicated that the gender interactions between teachers and students have statistically significant effects on academic achievement. The effects included (a) test scores and (b) teacher perceptions including stereotype can be powerful enough to shape the student outcomes. This evidence suggests that the perception of the teacher can affect the performance of students.

Nature of the Study

The present study was a basic qualitative study. The research investigated the perceptions of study participants through subjective, generalized questioning followed by

text analysis for overt and covert patterns, themes, or meanings (Van Manen, 1990). According to Merriam (2009), basic qualitative research design is used to understand how individuals interpret their experiences and the world around them, and the meaning. Therefore, the participants' experiences and how they interpret their experiences became very important to understand (Van Manen, 2003).

The recruitment process for participants in the study began with flyers posted in church bulletins throughout the Southeastern, United States, through the technique of snowballing, the use of online data collections, posting on websites and I incorporated online recruitment. The study utilized interviews exploring the participants' shared feelings about their educational experiences while being taught by teachers of a different race (Polkinghorne, 2005). Participants consisted of seven students and two for the pilot study from one county, located in the Southeastern United States, who were between the ages of 12 and 14 years. The duration of the interviews conducted, were approximately a half hour to an hour. To understand the educational experiences of the participants, the data in this study were analyzed using a basic qualitative inquiry.

Definitions

Academic disengagement: A multifaceted construct, which was identified as either behavioral, cognitive or emotional. The discipline in this study included absenteeism as a factor for a lack of connectivity with the school. Also, when disengagement is present, the student devalues academic obtainment; the end results may lead to the student being at risk of low achievement or dropping out of high school (Hancock & Zubrick, 2015).

Achievement gap: In education, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) defines the achievement gap as the disparity in academic performance between one group of students who statistically perform better than another and the difference in test score results is larger than the margin of error (NCES, 2009). The gaps can include gaps in opportunity, preparedness, and available resources needed to learn (Center for the Improvement of Student Learning, 2008).

At Risk: Students who have failed to master basic proficiency levels in subjects such as math and reading by 8th grade (Moore, 2006).

Certified teacher: Teaching license or teaching credentials that allows a teacher to legally work/teach in a specific area (Deady, 2020).

Cool pose: Majors (1992) describes cool pose as a fearless style of walking, the clothes you wear, a haircut, your gestures or the way you talk. The cool pose shows the dominant race that you are strong and proud despite your status in American society (Majors, & Billson, 1992).

Chilled: The feel of hanging out. A relaxed atmosphere. (Urban dictionary, 2002)

Cultural expectations: The difference in what is expected in the classroom by European American and African American teachers (Papageorge et al., 2016).

Diversity gap: It is the racial disparity between students and teachers of the same ethnic group (Paterson, 2018).

Educators: Individuals who are skilled in teaching all students. One who goes farther than expected to ensure classroom pedagogy and academic achievement of their students (Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary, n.d.).

Educational disparity: The disproportionate academic gap between minority students and their European American counterparts (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Heterogeneous mixing: The ability to adapt lessons to fit a mixed variety of individuals (Millrood, 2002).

Microaggression: The verbal, nonverbal, conscious, or unconscious messages, directed upon targeted groups. For example, a European American woman might clutch her purse as an African American male walk by. The hidden message is conveyed that African American males are criminals. (Sue, 2010).

Pedagogical content knowledge: Enables teaching and learning innovations that are relevant and specific for the culture of the student. Recognizes the importance of student's race and uses that cultural knowledge to adapt diverse abilities of the learner and the performance style of ethnically diverse students (McCaughtry, 2007).

Proficiency level: In the field of education the term can take many forms (Standardized test, assessments, and learning standards). The level changes in direct use of the standard used. It is not the students' grades, instead it refers to the proficiency level assigned by state or district assessment (The National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2018).

Psychosocial development: The basic psychological processes of perception, learning, and values that make up an individual capacity for interpersonal relationships (Selman, et al., 1997; Mages, 2007).

Race based treatment: The differences in treatment of minority students, such as lower expectations, higher suspension rates, or expelled and less likely to be placed in

advanced academic programs (Weir, 2016). Weir (2016) suggested the differences are based on cultural misunderstandings or unintentional acts that exhibit biases contributing to inequality in school.

Racial mismatch: A student who is taught by someone of a different race group or ethnicity (Grady & Reynolds, 2012).

Remote learning (Distance learning): When the student and instructor are not in the same physical environment. Learning occurs through technology (Ray, 2020).

Scope and Delimitations

The main focus of the research problem addressed in the study was the educational experiences of African American middle school males when racial mismatch exists. There are several reasons for inquiring into the educational opinions of African American middle school males. The specific focus was chosen because African American males continue to be disproportionately placed in special education classes. The issues include: (a) Harsher punishments for the same infractions as their peers; (b) Are not reading on grade level (c) Middle school males drop out prior to their high school graduation.

The identifying participants in the study included only African American male students. The boundaries of the study consist of interviewing African American male students attending middle school in Southeastern, United States. The participants did not include girls or other ethnic groups. Theories/conceptual frameworks most related to the area of study are African American male theory (AAMT) because it explains the lives of African American males, focusing on social justice for African American boys and men.

In addition to only recruiting African American male participants, the study is also confined to middle schools in Eastern North Carolina.

Limitations

The potential limitations of this study was that I used participants from one region and one school district in the Southeastern United States. Foreseeing possible limitations, I addressed this by recruiting students from differential middle schools within the county. Due to the uniqueness of this study, it is important to use only male participants from one ethnic group who attend middle school. This may be limiting but necessary. The data may be subject to personal biases due to the perceptions and students' points of view. Critical race theory's educational framework suggests that racism has conscious and unconscious components that may filter into educational institutions. As a result, participant bias or response bias may limit the sharing of educational experiences that might insight events that are both pleasant and uncomfortable for the participant. In this respect, limitations can ensue if participants do not reveal specific information because it may shed a negative light. In contrast, the findings could be subject to other interpretations if participants have an oppositional cultural theory ideology mindset; feeling that obtainment of education is only for their peers, this may limit the full scope of data for the study.

Significance of the Study

A high proportion of the studies in racial mismatch in the classroom are concerned with African American males being stereotyped (Douglas, 2007; Bell, 2009). Several researchers believe that African American males need early positive educational

experiences (Round-Bryant, 2008). Previous research findings show that negative experiences of the dominant race may also affect their educational potential (Douglas, 2007; Bell, 2009; Lynch, 2011). Dee (2004) conceded that there is a racial connection between negative experiences and academic success. Therefore, his findings argue that African American students excel academically when educators of the same race teach them. Nicolas (2014) asserted that nearly 82 % of public-school teachers in 2011-12 were European American. Therefore, the odds of having an African American male teacher from K-12 may be zero percent. Only two percent of the four million public schools' teachers are African American male teachers (Cottman, 2010). Also, the lack of African American teachers in the workforce contributes to a deficit in educational opportunities for African American boys (Bell, 2017). As a result, the lack of African American male teachers can be crucial in developing our neediest population (Nicolas, 2014).

In a recent study, Lozier (2013) added another important aspect to the puzzle of the educational gap by investigating the characteristics of effective teachers of African American male middle school students. The presence of teachers of the same race and gender, in a classroom setting, can shape African American male pedagogical performance (Brown, 2009). Positive strategies may exist when teacher's exhibit the following: (a) value African American student contributions; (b) know what appeals to African American males; (c) create comfortable learning environments that celebrate differences; and (d) are relatable and are creating culturally responsive classrooms. The strategies can produce students who work to make their teachers proud. As a result, teachers are fostering positive experiences for African American male students.

This study created an understanding of the interplay between structural, cultural, and individual factors that contribute to the academic success of African American boys; however, a gap remains concerning the perspective of African American middle school males. Their perspective was addressed in my basic qualitative research study.

Summary

The present study introduces racial mismatch as a key factor in the continual academic disparity among African American middle school males. The state by state diversity gap continues to increase. In the United States, there are 40% public schools that do not have African Americans on staff. Teachers of color represent only 17% of the workforce compared to 87 % European American educators. If a low socioeconomical student has at least one African American teacher, it cuts his dropout rate by 39 %. Also 29% express a desire to attend a four-year college. Thus, the outcomes can be generalized to support the importance of students being able to have at least one teacher who mirrors them racially.

The problem in the study was the disproportionate academic gap between African American middle school males and their European American counterparts. Therefore, Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework is chosen because of its focus on eliminating racism of all forms. The purpose of the study and research questions identifies the relationship between academic success and having teachers of a different race educate you. Significant terms are clarified or defined for the understanding of the reader. Lastly, the importance of this study may help teachers of another race reduce inequalities in the classroom, gain an understanding of the academic experiences of

African American males and, with time, narrow the academic gap, which can bring about a social change.

The next chapter includes a review of the literature that is pertinent to the basic qualitative study. The current study investigated the relationship between the educational experiences of African American middle school males whom teachers of a different race. The primary concern of this research is the academic impact of racial mismatch and the existence of racial inequalities in the classroom. Also, Chapter 2 dealt with the student's negative school experiences, the low standards and expectations by teachers of a different race.

Lastly, the literature provided data that was specific to male African American middle school students. The results of this study provided a personal look through participants' eyes as they share their feelings about being mismatched with their teachers racially in the classroom. The literature review concludes with focus on the gap in literature. The gap helped to provide a perspective that has been missing in the literature by understanding how students perceive and interact with their racially mismatched teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The single most pressing problem confronting the United States educational system is the crisis of African American males' academic achievement relative to their peers (Davis, 2003). The Council of the Great City Schools called the issue a national catastrophe (Palacios et al., 2017). Further, Daniel (2011) suggested if the crisis was among non-minority students lagging behind all other students, it would be called a national emergency. Therefore, the urgency to halt the disparity throughout African American male's education pipeline is imperative (Jackson, 2003).

Given the urgency of African American male success, it is essential to understand the point of view of African American middle school male students taught by teachers of a different race as it relates to the impact on their academic performance success. Previous literature suggested that African American males were subject to subtle microaggression threats of unintentional racial or discrimination in their school experience daily (Wong et al., 2014). Allen (2013) pointed out that teachers may be apprehensive with African American male students until they are high achievers. Noguera (2003) identified the media and public perception of images about African American males portrayed negatively, suggesting they are aggressive, lazy, and low achievers. In addition to negative media perception, Eberhardt et al. (2015) provided some insight into the perception of physical differences of groups, such as skin color and the impact of physical differences. The study results suggested that skin color is linked to inferences about the behavioral intentions of the racial group.

Whether conscious or unconscious, the negative media portrayals of African American males can seep into classroom settings Allen (2013). For example, suppose an African American male student embraces culturally driven clothing, such as hip hop fashion, or has tattoos and cuts in their eyebrows. In that case, those students can experience forms of racism, including racial microaggressions, in their own schooling experience regardless of what economic status they are from (Noguera, 2003).

In addition to media influences, a student's family can present negative stereotypes about their academic abilities (Wood et al., 2010). This can create a negative feedback loop, contributing to the continual gender gap in African Americans' male outcomes. Negative racial stereotypes influence European American teacher response towards African American students and lead to harsher disciplinary infractions over time (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). A controlled study by Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) discovered that a student's race can influence a teacher's reaction to behavior issues. When African American students exhibit negative behaviors or become withdrawn, teachers may label them as problems and enforce them to zero-tolerance policies (Vavrus & Cole, 2002), but not addressing the root causes of the student's behaviors (Dillard, 2019). Therefore, Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) concluded that race could change the way the teachers interpreted student's behavior when negative stereotypes existed and undermine the potential relationship of the teacher and student (Wood et al., 2010). Also, Wright (2015) drew a parallel between how teachers interpret behaviors or acting out may depend on the teacher's race. For example, when an African American student has an African American teacher (same race), that teacher is less likely to observe the student's

behavior as negative. In contrast, if the teacher is European American, the teacher is likely to view African American students' conduct as exhibiting misbehaviors.

Noguera (2003) concluded that African American males are subject to negative school experiences because of the societal perceptions of African American males. Therefore, it is crucial to close the existing gap in the literature concerning the students' experiences and perceptions of having teachers of a different race. The purpose of the proposed qualitative study is to address this gap, capture the educational experiences, and share the voices of African American middle school males taught by educators of a different race. Therefore, the present study was needed to close the existing gap in literature, and through the lived experiences, help African American middle school males close the existing achievement gap.

The purpose of the current basic qualitative study was to capture the lived experiences of African American middle school males' educational experiences when taught by educators of a different race. The study addressed the existing gap in the literature, the students' experiences, and perceptions, and understand academic outcomes when a racial mismatch exists. Given the urgency, the proposed study highlighted the educational disparity of African American middle school males, the connection between race, academic success, and racial mismatching. There is a need to know the lived experiences of African American middle school male students and to what extent their experiences with mismatch teachers contribute to their academic outcomes, teacher perception, racial inequality, and mistrust in the classroom on African American males' academic performance success. In hopes of gaining new ground, conversations must

begin concerning achievement gaps, racial inequalities, and prejudices in both private and public educational institutions (Barton & Coley, 2010). In the review of the literature, my quest for scholarly literature led to data pertinent to the extent of racial inequality in the classroom, the decline of African American teachers; next, the literature review focused on a diversity of viewpoints concerning who educates African American males and the importance of those relationships. Finally, closing the gap towards African American student success and ending the school to prison pipeline.

Literature Search Strategy

Sage Premier was utilized for articles about current trends associated with African American males. ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), Proquest Central, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO provided the full-text and peer-reviewed articles used in the study. Also, Google Scholar broadened the search with books, abstracts, and peer-review papers. The effectiveness of iterative search strategies proved to yield increased outcomes toward the advancement of the study. The process of selecting key terminology related to African American and minorities provided a fine selection of journal articles relating to the topic. The query of specific terms continues to evolve. Each time the responses yielded different outcomes; those terms are documented in a research tool.

The following key terms were used: *Academic barriers, African American male academic achievement, African American males in special education, African American middle school males, African American culture, European American teachers, critical race theory, culturally relevant education, discrimination in the classroom, drop-out rate and minorities, education, equal education, high-risk students, juvenile confinement,*

middle-class European American teachers, racial mismatch, racially mixed classroom, racism and education, social justice, school reform, teacher education, and *urban education*. Also, I used alternative words interchangeably to mean the same thing, e.g., *achievement* (synonym) *success*. The combination of search terms such as *disproportionate minority* and *racial mismatch*, for example, are close to the topic and provided options to further the search. Additional articles contributed to identifying, common words that emerged in the search.

The Crisis of African American Males' Academic Achievement

Former President Obama (2014) suggested that the United States have become numb to the statistical facts that African American boys and young men lag in performing in contrast to their peers in almost all academic measures. In fact, he added, by fourth grade, the average brown student reads below proficiency level, but their counterparts do not (Obama, 2014). Within the context of proficiency, by 8th grade only 17% of African American males are reading on level (Lynch, 2017). Thus, the groups that are facing some of the most severe challenges in the 21st century in this country are boys and young men of color (Obama, 2014). Bell (2009, 2010) posited that many African American males enter school, lacking many of the skills necessary to function in school. Each child enters school ready to engage in early learning experiences. When school readiness skills are present teachers can expand and further develop the child (Kentucky Department of Education, 2019). Evidence regarding the lack of school readiness can be seen in the example of two students entering school (Bolar, 2017). Boy A has been in-home daycare with an older caregiver who allows him to watch television and play outside until his

parents pick him up. Boy B attends a Christian preschool for over a year. The preschool curriculum prepares student B to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, identify his numbers, as well as his ABCs. He performs appropriate mathematical equations. Due to school readiness skills, Boy A and Boy B have two different learning experiences. When comparing the learning experiences of the two boys, the observer of boy A and boy B can distinguish the differences in the boys that can hinder or produce an excelling student. Likewise, when racial mismatch exists, those educating African American males must understand the educational disparity, recognize the differences that hinder academic success, and discern what produces excelling students of color (Bolar, 2017).

There is a growing body of evidence that shows most teachers can help students learn, but African American boys continue to be at risk (Milner, 2015; Noguera, 2008). They lag behind their European American peers in academic test scores, they drop out prior to graduation, are three times as likely to live in poverty and are 10 times as likely to attend a high poverty school (Milner, 2015; Noguera, 2008; Kunjufu, 2010). Although other issues other issues contribute to the disproportionate academic success among middle school males, the transition to middle school, stereotypes, and a lack of teacher student match may rank as prominent factors contributing to academic dilemmas. Pollard (2020) added that having a teacher of the same cultural experiences may allow the student to succeed because the teacher and student share similarities.

According to Ladson-Billings (1994), the first steps toward student success is having a culturally sensitive teacher. Culturally sensitive teachers gain an understanding of one's own cultural beliefs first. For example, Matias (2013) suggested, if a European

American teacher is aware of her own culture and is taught culturally responsive teaching with African American students, the teacher may be more equipped to close the gap between African American, Latino Americans and European American students. Matias (2013) emphasized the importance of teachers that work in urban school communities to understand the beauty and the difficulty of teaching in that environment before they ever step into a classroom. Ladson-Billings (1994) mentioned, journaling as a daily routine for a week helps European American student teachers observe that not everyone is like them. In addition to cultural awareness, curricula aligned with African American middle school males' lives contribute to academic success.

A specific area of concern about African American middle school males is the statistics, which show only 14% of African American middle school eighth grade students scored at or above the proficient level and only 10% read on grade level (Brewster & Stephenson, 2014). Before entering high school, the educational potential of African American boys continues to drop at epic proportions, adding to the increasing dropout rate. Lower high school graduations are due to a lack of opportunity (The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012). A lack of opportunity gap occurs when students have educational inequalities that limit their success chances (The Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012; United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights 2016). The majority of United States school districts, and communities, lack the conditions necessary for African American males to succeed academically (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). The data indicated that students who graduate on time due to their natures graduate on time due to their natural ability instead of what they

received in public education. Statistics also show population in 2009- 2010 were African American, only 52% of African American males graduated (Mincy et al., 2006). According to Noguera (2003) to gain the full scope of understanding dropout rates among ninth-grade students the examination must begin at the elementary school level. On average, African American male high school students, read on the same level as an eighth-grade European American student. (Noguera, 2003). The average eighth grade student of color performs at the same level as the average fourth grade European American student (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003; The National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2018). Likewise, NCES reports a four-year reading gap between African American high school students and their counterparts (Howard, 2006). Teaching a second grader (seven years old) how to read is easier than teaching a 14-year-old high schooler how to read (Noguera, 2003). A ninth-grader who does not have the readiness skills to begin high school successfully tends to drop out instead. Tatum suggests that many African American males do not believe that reading for the purpose of intellectual reasons matter (Tatum, 2005).

In reviewing the research literature on academic readiness, the percentages of students meeting the ACT college readiness benchmark indicate the students who are likely to be considered ready for college level course (Allen & Mattern, 2019). The 2014 College Testing Program revealed that African American male students are less prepared for the ACT entrance exam (with a score of 17) than European American students who scored 22.3. The persistent gap over decades continues to persist (The Journal of Black Higher Education, 2014). For example, the highest overall gap exists in the English

section of the test; African American males scored an average of 15.8, while European American males scored 22.0. Also, 34 % of African American students who took the test were ready for college-level English courses, and only 14 % were prepared for math compared to 52 % of European American students. Based on the results of the ACT, one in twenty African American students were college ready in all four areas (English, reading, math, and science. European American students are seven times as likely to be college ready in all four areas (The Journal of Black Higher Education, 2014).

The negative experiences of teachers of a different race may affect the educational potential of their students (Douglas, 2007; Bell, 2009). For example, minority students are more likely to be singled out or misinterpreted by European American teachers for classroom disruptions, compared to European American male offenders (Bell, 2015). Examples of extreme reasons must occur for European American suspensions to take place. One of three things must be present: a gun, a knife, or bloodshed (Kunjufu, 2013). Whereas when an African American male is suspended, it may be as minor as the teacher not liking the way he looks at her, she does not like what he says, or she may not like that he walks away from her. Also, most of the cases indicate that the removal from class occurred because the student refused to say, *yes ma'am*, or *sir* (Kunjufu, 2013). Simple directives to talk quieter, take off your hat, or alter their walk (body language) have caused teachers to remove the student from the classroom (Kunjufu, 1995). Therefore, teachers who are not astute to students of another cultural identity, may overreact and implement unenforceable rules (Armento, & Irvine, 2001). Overreacting and implementing unenforceable rules can range from the teacher falsely accusing the student

without obtaining all the facts, making a public spectacle of them, sharing private information, grabbing them aggressively, or making racial comments (Hucks, 2011). African American students may be unjustly targeted for removal from the classroom and suspended from school (Wald & Losen, 2003). In a study by Bell (2014) he addsed, participants felt that cultural mismatch was a factor. The students who participated in the study add that in addition to cultural mismatch, their teacher often ask them to repeat what they are saying because they do not understand what they are saying. While communication is the essence of instructional success, often communication is problematic for many teachers who have ethnically diverse classrooms (Gay, 2018)

The national expulsion rate reveals that even though African American students represent 16% of the school population and European American students represent 51%, African American students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled from school. The data over time shows that African American males are suspended at a greater rate than their peers. For example, in the year 2013 and 2014, 18% of African American male students were suspended and 10% of female African American girls, while only 5% of European American males were suspended, and 2% European American girls were suspended once (United States Department of Education, 2014).

The problem with oppressive educational settings is that they can impose rules, and maintaining control of minority students (Emdin, 2016). Too often, when these students speak or interact in the classroom in ways that teachers are uncomfortable, they are categorized as troubled students, or they are diagnosed with disorders such as attention deficit disorder (ADD) and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD; Emdin, 2016).

The Association for Psychological Science (2015) recently shared a study finding that African American students were more likely to be labeled as troublemakers by their teachers and treated harshly in the classroom (Smith, 2015). Also, they are labeled as less likely to engage in the classroom, which results in their being considered academically inferior (Emdin, 2016) academically. In addition to being labeled as academically less engaging, damaging components to racial mismatch are the lower grade patterns among African American males and teachers of a different race (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). For example, when a racial mismatch is present, research reports that African American students face disadvantages compared to their European American classmates (Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Wodtke et al., 2011). In fact, for decades, African Americans have been rated lower by European American teachers on both their ability and behavior (Alexander et al., 1987; Ferguson, 2003; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Tyson, 2002; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013).

The studies of the impact of racial mismatching in the classroom tend to focus on the ability of the teacher to teach, rather than the harmful consequences of the lack of cultural competence of the teacher. There is a need to know what impact European American teachers have on African American students' achievement and the students' perceptions of these teachers. These factors are plausibly related to racial inequalities in elementary, middle and high school (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). The cultural fit between student and teacher can increase a student's academic, nonacademic performance, score higher on standardized tests, and have favorable behavior outcomes (Redding, 2019). Another example can be derived from the experimental data measures

of effective teaching project, that suggests matching the student with teachers with racial/ethnic matching to improve students' opportunities to learn and reduce achievement disparities is rooted in the critical role that teachers play in their students' cognitive and behavioral development (Kraft, 2019). Further, the data analysis from the Measures of Effective Teaching Study shows that African American students reported feeling more engaged with the curriculum and having closer relationships when assigned to an African American teacher than a European American teacher (Cherng & Halpin, 2016).

Finally, negative perceptions may also bring about conflict in the classroom, lack of cooperation and underachievement (Irizarry, 2015; Birch & Ladd, 1997). Furthermore, teachers' perceptions can also influence the quality of teacher instruction and students' academic potential, emotional stability, interests, and motivation (McKown & Weinstein, 2008).

In the following pages, I provide the study's theoretical framework by presenting substantial findings related to the current research study and its relevance to the present research area. Lastly, I identified the research gap in the body of knowledge by examining past experiences and identifying what is known and what is not.

The Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation associated with this study employed two main theories, critical race theory (CRT) and oppositional cultural theory (OCT). The Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement consists of activists and scholars interested in studying and eliminating all forms of racism and restoring relationships among racial groups. The

movement shares many ideologies of the civil rights movement and draws from the works of W. E. B. DuBois, Fredrick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, and Dr. Martin Luther King. Even though CRT shares many ideologies of the Civil rights movement, it expands its ideas on a broader spectrum that includes self-interest, economics, feelings, and the unconscious (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT allows an examination of racism across dominant cultural modes of expression, by challenging claims of colorblindness and other forms of ideologies that mask European American privilege connected with the dominant race (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001).

CRT originated as a legal scholarship in response to Neo-Marxist Critical Legal Studies movement in the 1970s with scholars such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In its post-1987 form, CRT emerged from criticisms of the Critical Legal Studied (CLS) movement; not listening to the lived experiences of those oppressed, limits critical legal studies (Delgado, 1995a; Ladson-Billing, 1998). Therefore, CRT began to pull away from Critical legal framework which restricted their ability to analyze racial injustices. (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Crenshaw, 2002; Delgado, 1988; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

In 1995, CRT entered the educational field as a African American theorization of race in response to institutionalized racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Also, it was introduced in educational literature as an academic discipline which identified the problem of inequalities in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Its focus centered on anti-African American racism. Before the use of CRT as a tool for analyzing racial inequalities in education, scholars of color inquired into the failure to examine race and

culture (Gordon, 1995). Critical race theorists noted a dominant focus in the literature on either class (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) or gender (Weiler, 1988). Within the last two decades, the proponents in the field of education have looked to critical race theory raising the question concerning whether proper attention was being paid towards inequalities by other culture-centered framework (Ladson-Billings, 2003; Sleeter et al., 2002).

CRT maintains that society is divided along racial lines comprising the oppressor and those who are victims. The basic principles recognize that racism is part of the culture of American society. It challenges claims of colorblindness, and Critical Race scholars believe that people have an equal chance of advancement based on their talents. Whereas CRT claims that racism contributes to all forms of disadvantages of a group as well as works towards ending all forms of racism. Critical race theory aims to end any form of oppression and ensure that all forms of racism or oppression of any form are ended (Matsuda et al., 1993). Therefore, the use of personal narratives of African Americans can solidify the evidence of inequality by producing valid forms of evidence of injustices through lived experiences. Delgado (1995a) suggests that stories have the power of destroying and changing mindsets. Thus, the voices of people of color are essential for completing analysis of the educational system to understand how African American males are affected (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In this respect, critical race theory scholars explore the connections between students of color and their schooling experience (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

When identifying racial inequality in the educational system, findings of earlier studies appear to be in general agreement that student success is associated with identity (Ross et al., 2016). For example, when African Americans identify with their cultural heritage there is an increase in their self-esteem and academic motivation. Therefore, developing a positive self-identity promotes African American student academic success (Hurd et al., 2012). Whereas, being exposed to any negative race-related experiences stagnates their academic abilities while creating further limitations (Gullan et al., 2011).

The academic success of African American middle school males tends to be correlated with own-race teachers. Race matching between teacher and student is linked to positive academic outcomes (Egalite, et al., 2015). Findings of earlier studies agree with the link between one's own race and individual success. The notion of race and academic success is supported by the research of Harper (2012b); Some researchers argue that when students feel valued, they succeed as much or greater than their counterpart does (Allen, 1992). In fact, a recent study reports that having one African American teacher in elementary school lessens the chances of high school dropout rates and increases the expectations of African American males entering college (Jackson, 2017).

CRT has five themes that are the basis of its philosophy. (a) Critical race theorists believe that race and racism are permanent. (b) Critical race theorists challenge the mainstream ideologies such as class and race being the basis for oppression and how we look at race in our society. (c) Critical race theorists are also committed to ending other forms of racism (d) CRT draws on the legitimacy of the lived experiences of people who encounter forms of racism such as, class, gender and sexual orientation (Matsuda, 1991).

(d) CRT draws on the legitimacy of the lived experiences of people of color through counter-storytelling by including their narratives, and family history (Bell, 1987; Delgado, 1989, 1995a, 1995b, 1996; Olivas, 1990). (e) CRT focuses on the development of pedagogy, the examination of curriculum, and research that accounts for the role that racism plays in the United States education and the elimination of the normality of it (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Irvine, 2001).

CRT takes the position that defining racism is important. Equally important to CRT is understanding forms of stereotypes, both conscious and unconscious. Allport (1979) has defined stereotyping as an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) individual conduct concerning that category. Utilizing Allport's definition of stereotyping, Solorzano (1997) reported three main categories that are interchangeable among people of color. The categories include intelligence, character, and appearance. The character of people of color is viewed in the media as violent, irresponsible, lazy, dumb and dirty. Omni and Winant (1994) reported when one thinks of welfare, low-income housing, low economic status, increased drop-out rates, and drug-infested communities the portrait in mind is programmed to see people of color. Even though these types of norms are not socially condoned, Bonilla and Girling (1973) suggested that this form of stereotyping is used to justify low expectations, separate classes for minorities, and maintaining segregated communities for people of color. To further the point, in a study Markowitz and Puchner (2014) interviewed both preservice in-service teachers; results show that teachers suggests that African American families are difficult to deal with, are violent, deviant and give minimal care to their children's

education. The few of the teachers suggests that being in a diverse community is heroic, and they are there to save people of color (Markowitz & Puchner, 2014).

Delgado (1988) states that European Americans rarely see blatant acts of racism but may have selective perception and not hear the racial slights made in their presence (Lawrence, 1987). Whereas African Americans perceive statements of racism all the time. Delgado and Stefancic (1992) have raised questioned about the subtle ways that stereotypes manifest in private situations when African Americans are not around. An example of European Americans' real feelings about African Americans was examined by ABC News Nightline (Bettag et al., 1996). If a closer inspection of real feelings in diverse settings such as classrooms and teacher lounges could be examined, Dalton (1995) suggested the effects of macro and microaggressions on minorities would be seen. Thus, on a professional level, subtle terminology, or coded language such as the student is at risk or uneducable is used to describe students of color (Williams, 1992). Dalton (1995) further asserted that if European Americans were placed in surroundings where they do not dominate, they may begin to see themselves racially and gain a better understanding of how they perceive people of color.

Central to the study of CRT is the cultural deficit view. The cultural deficit view is an individualistic viewpoint that lacks minority obtainment. This model focuses on the acculturation of students of color to the dominant cultural beliefs and behaviors. Also, the results that emerged from the teacher model minimizes or downplays the cultural values of the minority student and maximizes those of the dominant. Despite claims that the model is losing ground, it continues to remain. In the review of the literature, critical race

theory provides a framework to challenge cultural deficit theory. By looking through a critical race lens means critiquing deficit theorizing and data that may limit voices of color. Such deficit research sees deprivation in communities of color. One example of the most deprived forms of racism which occurs within the United States schools is deficit thinking. Deficit thinking takes the stance that students of color are at fault of poor academic success because: (a) Students enter school without the cultural knowledge needed (b) parents do not support students' academic obtainment. These assumptions aid in the overindulgence of cultural knowledge deemed valuable from the dominant race. Garcia and Guerra (2004) found that such deficit thinking about family backgrounds are shaped by sociocultural and linguistic assumptions. In addition, Garcia and Guerra (2004) further suggested that educators believe that parents, community, and students should conform to the already effective system. CRT can help in the distorted views of people of color.

This theoretical approach is useful for examining how race and the meanings attached to race influence the educational context for students of color (Henfield, 2006; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Using critical race theory as a framework in education research challenges the way race and racism impact educational practices. CRT in education acknowledges the contradictory nature of education within schools. It refutes dominant ideologies and European American privilege while validating the experience of people of color. In addition, critical race theory emphasizes the importance of gaining an understanding of how others experience racism and respond to it. It is legal documentation of historical events that affect all members of a community regardless of

racial identity. In effect, it allows the participants to voice their concerns, particularly those concerns related to race and race relations. By using critical race theory, it seeks to address concerns facing individuals affected by racism and those who perpetrate it, consciously or unconscious (microaggressions).

Summarizing racism and its various forms are not an easy endeavor. To bring about social change in the unfair treatment of students of color educational experience, Romo, (2016) suggests there must be an examination of teacher programs, and the knowledge and attitudes needed to teach diverse students (Gay, 2002). Therefore, teacher-training programs goal is to provide candid with the understanding necessary to equip them to become aware of their own biases to gain understanding of their students' lives (Romo, 2016).

Culturally responsive teaching skills are needed to gain understanding of the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to teach a diverse population (Gay, 2002). In addition, collaboration with the community, and teachers who are willing to work with racially diverse students are essential components to student success (Gay, 2002). Thus, the need to understand the effects of African American middle school males' educational experiences is crucial in the development of student-teacher relationships. In this respect, Ladson-Billing (1994) and Irizarry and Raible (2011) add relevance to the importance of establishing teacher-student relationships, and culturally responsive learning. Lastly, critical race theory seeks to examine the educational experiences of African American youths who are taught by teachers of a different race.

Oppositional Cultural Theory (OCT)

Oppositional Cultural Theory (OCT) originated as the resistance model. It was initially developed for high school students to assess why students doubt the value of school and if they become more resistant over time? The key component of the theory results from the perception of student's unfair opportunity structure (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998). One example of an unfair opportunity structure put forth by Ogbu (1978, 1991a) is the racial differences in school performance between individuals from involuntary minority groups (African Americans) and those from voluntary groups.

In the context of United States history, voluntary minorities are individuals who have come to the United States by choice. Some have come for the purpose of having a better life (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). However, involuntary minorities, groups are individuals who have come to the United States against their will. Ogbu and Simons (1998) present two clear explanations that distinguishes involuntary minority groups (1) they were forced against their will to become part of the United States, and (2) they usually interpret their presences in the United States as forced on them by European American's. Academically, involuntary minorities have persistent cultural and language difficulties in school (Ogbu & Simons,1998). Whereas voluntary minority groups usually experience some problems in school. However, the differences in academics and cultural and language are not long lasting (Wang, 1995).

The following experiences might be potential barriers to student success. For example, the school performance of those who did not migrate to this country by free choice (African Americans) and those from the dominant race who came to this country

by free will (Europeans') and drew a parallel between OCT and the value of schooling (Ogbu, 1978). The potential barriers that African American's experience regarding future employment, racial discrimination, and the inequalities they experience being an involuntary minority in the United States are potential barriers to success (Harris, 2006).

Students who believe that academic success is essential will move towards their future goals and will achieve (Butler-Barnes et al., 2017). In addition to identification with academics, during the adolescent years, African American who do not believe in academic success, may decline in their academic persistence. The lack of persistence among African American males' presents concerns among scholars (Butler-Barnes et al., 2017). For example, students who believe that academic achievement represents acting like European American's do not advance academically (McWhorter, 2000). McWhorter (2000) furthers the argument by basing this behavior as culturally learned, and can be seen in the dress, hairstyle, speech and body language of students who do not embrace academics.

Highly crucial to academic advancement, drew a parallel between lack of academic success and involuntary minority; to understand racial minorities lack of academic advancement, there must be knowledge of the minorities (e.g., African American, Mexican American, or American Indians) choice to come to the United States on a voluntary basis or forced (Diamond & Huguley, 2014). Voluntary minorities may have favorable outlooks in coming to the United States, compared to the homeland they left. Whereas minorities involuntary entrance to the United States, may be viewed unfavorable because they did not come by their will. Ogbu (1991) hypothesized that it is

crucial to identify the relationship involuntary minorities have to institutions such as school, compared to those who came to the United States voluntarily (Diamond & Huguley, 2014). Thus, the involuntary minority may develop an opposition to education.

Negative school experiences could play a role in minority students' attitudes towards their achievement (Tyson, 2002, 2003). For example, students from the dominant race (European American students) maintain an optimistic view of academic performance (Ogbu, 1978). Whereas minority groups express their disapproval towards the dominant race by resisting academic success in school (Ogbu, 1978). In addition to achievement, Tyson (2002, 2003) associated the lack of desire to achieve with subtle transforming of African American students' culture. He suggested that a strong desire to transform a student's culture can advance inadequacy associated with being a student of color. The most important tenet of OCT shows that the underlying rationale for resistance is the fear of acting European (Fordham, & Ogbu, 1986).

The educational system in the United States continues to focus its attention on trying to understand the debilitating condition facing African American boys and the ramifications for their life outcomes (Noguera, 2003; Justice Policy Institute, 2009; Alexander, 2010; National League of Cities, 2012). Activist Bell Hooks (2004) adds another aspect of African American educational disparity, the relationship between internalized messages within the home, and messages in the peer group. Hooks highlights the problem of teachers of a different race and the internalization of messages within the African American community. For example, evidence indicates that in the African

American community, there is a developing fear of feminine traits developing when a boy likes to read (Hooks, 2004).

The internalized oppression catapults African Americans to criticize those who have otherwise succeeded (Lipsky, 2004). Therefore, if African American young men view success as becoming closer to the stereotype of European America or intellectual sissies, there is no wonder, few aspire to pursue corporate or executive positions. To that end, without the encouragement from other African Americans in their peer group, many are opting out of educational obtainment altogether (Lipsky, 2004). Due to psychological stresses of fitting in (belonging) when caught in this emotional tug-of-war of the burden of acting like European Americans, African American youth hide their intelligence and would instead sabotage their success than being taunted or harassed by other African American students (Ford, 1996; Wildhagen, 2011; Ogbu, 2004).

A basic assumption, pertinent to the study of OCT occurs from the influence of opposition to education. Specifically, African Americans feel obligated to not "act like European Americans." Meaning it is the outward disregarding or outward distaining of academic success to fit in with "being African American." (Ogbu, 1991). A significantly high proportion of the studies in the field are concerned with high academic aspiration of African Americans, which in many cases supersede that of European Americans. Unfortunately, Ogbu (1991) adds that academic aspirations do not add up to their pro school attitude. Despite their positive outlook they still fall behind academically (Mangino, 2013). Learning problems associated with academic disparity is not the only limits put on African American males, but also coping with the elements of the burden of

"acting European." (p. 201). In addition to resistance of academic success, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) highlighted another problem: the older the student becomes, beginning in secondary level education (grades nine to twelve) the more aware of his academic disparity he becomes. He becomes aware of limited African American male success in society and his own negative educational outlook compared to his peers (Ogbu, 2003, p.154). Therefore, African American males tends to give up their quest for education (Ogbu, 2003). In addition to Critical Race Theory (CRT), Oppositional Cultural Theory (OCT) exemplified by Ogbu (1991) argued that OCT is useful in understanding the resistance that students of another race may show towards their teacher and learning. Furthermore, oppositional culture, and increase in disciplinary problems due to racial differences between African American students and European American teachers is due to the lack of cultural competencies. Increased disciplinary reports exists in schools with African American high-density population (Rausch & Skiba, 2004). In addition to legitimizing the relationship between discipline and achievement Rausch and Skiba (2004) reported the negativity associated with resistance to school by African American students.

A closer inspection of these assumptions suggested Ogbu's oppositional culture theory, or the resistance theory is evident that the more the student grows and becomes aware of inequality the greater the resistance to education because of their negative experiences (Harris, 2006). For example, students who have experienced a crisis in their academic performance may become discouraged and begin to lack the desire it takes to learn (Ogbu, 2003). Also, certain minorities recognize social injustices and lack of

opportunities and engage in oppositional behaviors, which can translate into becoming anti-achievement oriented (Fordham, & Ogbu,1986).

Irving and Hudley (2008) revealed a positive relationship between cultural mistrust and oppositional cultural attitudes as a significant predictor of academic achievement (Irving & Hudley, 2008). For instance, as mistrust increases, academic outcome expectations decrease. As mistrust increases, oppositional cultural attitudes also increase (Irving & Hudley, 2008). Thus, oppositional cultural attitudes clearly undermine educational expectations. A closer inspection of these assumptions suggests that counteracting this resistance can occur by educating and training teachers to teach African American male students.

The present study raises three interrelated questions in the qualitative study: Does the teacher student relationship of middle school African American males taught by a different race affect the academic excellence of the student? Is there racial equality/inequality contributing more to the progress of African American males in the classroom? Does racial equality/inequality influence the expectations and perceptions of the teacher who are not culturally competent? Therefore, an investigation into the perceptions between racial equality/inequality, of students' academics when taught by teacher mismatch is relevant to this study (Fox, 2016; Gershenson et al., 2016).

The Dilemma of Racial Mismatch

It is critical that the nation not overlook racial inequality in the classroom. The invisible barrier has caused decades of separate, unequal educational progress among African American middle school males (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Shirley Chisholm, the

first African American congresswoman in the United States, wrote that "Racism is so universal in this country, so widespread and deep-seated, that it is invisible because it is so normal" (Chisholm, 1970, p. 147). Therefore, the normality of racism exists even in the classroom. Researchers continue to report resistance and fatigue (e.g., Flynn, 2015) when talking about the subject of race (Crowley & Smith, 2015). Accumulating research indicates that mismatch has been in the foreground for at least 25 years, but only recently in 2019, researchers have begun to *examine* systematically the effect European American teachers have on African American students' academics. For example, Battey (2019) conducted a study of 25 middle school math classes, utilizing three different settings. The settings included a European American teacher with matched European American students, African American teacher matched with majority of African American students, and lastly, European American teacher with mostly African American students. The results pointed out that both teachers equally reprimanded the students rather than praised them. However, after viewing video clips, researchers observed that the European American teacher chastised African American students routinely for misconduct two to four times as same race. Battey (2019) discovered in his study when African American males' students experienced negative interactions, they performed worse with a 16% decrease in academic achievement. Moreover, Gershenson et al. (2017) discovered in their study the long run causal effects of having a same-race teacher effects have on academic attainment. According to the findings, if an African American has exposure to one same matched teacher in elementary school reduces the chances of high school dropout rates 39%. Colquit (1978) suggested that the perceptual difference between

African Americans and European Americans poses a dilemma for teaching. Howard

(1999) reported a lack of connection and sensitivity toward students of color by their

European American teacher.

Previous studies have indicated a need for additional exploration into the

experiences of African American males in the classroom with teachers of a different race.

In the fall of 2019, 50.8 million public school student's pre-k through 12th grade was

represented in public school (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016).

Demographically, 7.7 million are African American students, 23.7 million European

American students, and 13.9 million Hispanic. The United States Department of

Education (2013) add the majority attending urban public schools are African American

students whereas less than 20% of public-school teachers are minorities (Goldring et al.,

2013). Furthermore, within 34 states, a demographic divide exists between teacher and

student (Boser, 2014). As a result, there is an overwhelming number of European

American teachers who are teaching minority students (Berchini, 2015; Strauss, 2015).

Cherng and Halpin (2016) addressed the subject of ethnic mismatch in teacher population

with evidence that teachers' perceptions differ by student's racial background.

Previous researchers (e.g., Alexander et al., 1987; Downey and Pribeshn 2004;

Ehrenberg et al., 1995; Morris, 2005; Sbarra & Pianta, 2001; 2006) suggest that all

students hope to be treated equally by their teachers, regardless of race, ethnicity, class,

and socioeconomic status. Scholarly evidence indicates African American students'

behavior and academic potential are evaluated more negatively than their peers. As

mentioned, teacher treatment of students differentiates depending on their ethnicity and

academic status. For example, African American boys are at greater risk of being disciplined more harshly in comparison to European American students (Gregory, et al., 2010). Research has documented that harsher consequences are administered to African American males as compared to their European American counterparts for less severe offenses (Skiba et al., 2002). In a quasi-experimental method that focused on how teachers' perceptions of students' academic success vary by the students' racial/ethnic background, it was found that teachers have higher expectations for European American and Asian students than they do African American students (Baron et al., 1985; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Further, the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) found that teachers perceive minority students as putting in less effort towards academic success than their peers (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998). In the current study, participants have the opportunity to candidly share their academic experiences from their point of view as a African American male student taught by a different race.

The Decline of Minority Teachers

As mentioned, prior, the literature is replete with references to the decline of African American teachers in the past three years. For example, nearly 82% of public-school teachers in 2011-12 were European American, including administrators, and support staff (Lewis et al., 2008; Nicolas, 2014). Nearly every state data from the 2012 Schools and Staffing Survey shows the decline of teachers of color (Cox et al., 2016). African American males comprise only 2% of the teacher workforce. Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Black Men and Boys asserts that two percent is not good enough (Holmes, 2014). But the odds of

having an African American male teacher from K-12 may be zero percent. It should be noted that the lack of African American male teachers can be crucial in the development of middle school males. Given that 75% of Black boys live in female-headed households (Snyder et al., 2006), policy-makers assume that African American male teachers are more likely to be attuned to the lived experiences of their African American male students (Lynn et al., 1999; Lynn, 2006).

While a small but growing body of literature suggests positive academic gains for boys who have male teachers and in particular teachers of color (Dee, 2005; Ouazad, 2008). In public schools, new African American male recruits have the potential to act as role models by helping to increase academics for African American males (Holland, 1991; Rezai-Rashti, & Martino, 2010) and father figures (Kunjufu, 2005). There can be potential problems with a singular focus on recruiting male teachers as a policy lever to improve the learning outcomes for boys.

Research findings show the importance of the link between African American males and African American male teachers. To improve the crisis of African American male students, the recruitment for African American male teachers is essential (Bristol, 2015). Thus, the lack of African American male teachers can be crucial in the development of our neediest population (Nicolas, 2014). By understanding African American males' needs, an African American male teacher can shape their pedagogical performance (Brown, 2009). Gassaway (2017) establishes a connection between the effect of a mirror image and African American males. To illustrate the point, Gassaway (2017) cites two examples. student A, an African American kindergartener who did not

have a mentor or someone who mirrored him. He (student A) has difficulty in classroom behavior and student B, a twelfth grader who had a mentor throughout his educational experience. He (student B) receives offers to attend prestigious universities. Gassaway (2017) concludes that the difference in student A versus student B is not grounded around the difference in their background. The difference is that student B had a mentor at the beginning of his educational experience, who happened to be someone who looked like him who achieved goals. Gassaway (2017) adds that this captivated student B, to understand that success is obtainable. Whereas student A, does not have a mentor who is deeply committed and involved in his life, thus, the student may have difficulty throughout his school experience (Gassaway, 2017, p. 11). In the current study, participants addressed what contributes to their overall success in the classroom.

Same Race Teachers

African American students in grades three through five who have at least one teacher who is of the same race reduces the probability of dropout rates by 29% even if they come from a low socioeconomic background (Gershenson et al., 2017). Specifically, male students who have one or more African American teachers have even lower dropout rates; their chances of dropping out, falls to 39% and students tend to aspire to go to a four-year college (Gershenson et al., 2017).

Scholarly evidence shows that European American educators evaluate African American students' academics and behavior more negatively than their counterparts (Alexander et al., 1987; Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Ehrenberg et al., 1995; Morris, 2005; Sbarra, & Pianta, 2001). There is evidence that implies racial inequalities in classrooms

in elementary, middle, and high school do exist (McKown & Weinstein, 2003; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). Teachers' treatment of students depends on their ethnicity (Bates & Glick, 2013). For example, African Americans boys are at higher risk of being disciplined more harshly about simple infractions than European American students and have lower expectations. When different expectations exist, students tend to perform worse (Gregory et al., 2010). However, when high expectations are set, performance is strengthening, and students build stronger relationships with their teachers (Jensen, 2009).

Academically, unfair race-based treatment of African American students such as lower expectations, suspensions, and expulsion from school contributes to the decline in minority grades (Berkel et al., 2010; DeGarmo, & Martinez, 2006; Neblett et al., 2006). For example, race-based treatment specifically, the disproportionate consequences of suspension rates have racialized academic consequences that are linked to lower scores (Morris & Perry, 2016). Exclusionary practices can contribute to the lack of motivation to do well academically and may contribute to racial gaps in education obtainment (Wong et al., 2003; Morris, & Perry, 2016). Benner & Graham, (2011) add the unfair treatment of minority students is likely to increase academic disengagement. However, when minority students are taught with culturally supportive teaching, and a learner centered context, it increases the probability of academic achievement among minority groups (Richards et al., 2004). In addition to the curriculum, Sheikh and Mahmood (2014) affirms that when a teacher uses the student's preferred teaching style, it motivates the student to learn. Teachers of a different race can adequately coordinate learning experiences that are

culturally relevant for students of color (Colquit, 1978). From this viewpoint, the differences between minority students having a curriculum that is nonsupportive of their identity and having a supportive education that increases academic success are vital (Boykin & Bailey, 2000; Ellison et al., 2000).

Same-race teachers tend to create an environment that is caring and encourages high academic standards. Thus, being taught under an individual's cultural lens can lead to student success (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Foster, 1995; Gay, 2000, 2003; Hollins, 1996; Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). On the other hand, teachers who exhibit misunderstandings related to students' culturally conditioned behavior can lead to failure and low self-esteem. Cohen et al. (2004) drew a parallel between words of praise, a smile, or encouragement as ways to enhance a student's self-esteem. Also, self-esteem can equip the teacher to deal with students' race and personality differences. Therefore, self-image is vital for both the student and teacher (Rosenberget al., 1995).

Evidence regarding the heterogeneous mixture of the diverse student population in the public-school system challenges teachers with students from different cultural groups (Alsubaie, 2015). Students of color represent 51% of K-12 classrooms, while 80% of teachers are European American. Rohrkemper (1984) noted that students of color perceive information differently from culturally different teachers. As the present study looks to improve the academic success of African American middle school males, the need to understand the lived experiences of students of a different race and their teachers is essential to alleviate the existing academic gap. The third worst demographic gap exists in Illinois between teachers of color and student racial match (Boser, 2011). This crisis

prompts the Grow Your Own teacher (GYO) initiative (Bartow et al., 2014). GYO is a community-based program that prepares low income paraprofessionals and community leaders who what an opportunity to become a teacher. The primus of the initiative allows students of color to see teachers who look like the student. Analyses of Tennessee's Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) data concluded that kindergarten students (both African American and European American), who were assigned the same race teacher increased in test scores in both math and reading (Dee, 2004, 2005; Mosteller, 1995). As mentioned above, Cherng and Halpin (2016) asserted that the demographic divide between teacher and student is a growing concern. An explanation of the growing concern is the perception of minority students who have a more favorable perception towards minority teachers (Quiocho, & Rios, 2000). A favorable perception can turn into motivation to produce better grades and academic outcomes (Midgley et al., 1989; Teven & McCroskey, 1997; Wentzel, 2002). Therefore, Cherng (2016) adds, students may not produce good grades for someone they do not favor. Also, another crucial point; teachers of a different race tend to underestimate the academic abilities of minority students (Cherng, 2016). Additional evidence indicates teachers have higher expectations for Asian and European American students and lower expectations for Latino and African American students (Baron, et al., 1985; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007).

The occurrence of racial mismatch harms African American students (Lewis, 2006). Previous research has investigated the impact of racial mismatch among middle-class European American teachers and African American middle school males from lower socioeconomic status. Revealing that African American males have to be

reprimanded for problems in the classroom. The consistent interruption in the class can become a disadvantage to the class, because of the large amount of teaching time it requires to handle disruption (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). In addition to posing a disadvantage, when a racial mismatch is present in the classroom, the influence of the teacher's perceptions can shape student learning and teacher-student interactions.

Accordingly, teacher-student interactions may clash with an African American student's cultural style. For example, Boykin (1978) investigated the mismatch of styles and described the similarities of the African American student cultural styles reflect vestiges of the high levels of energy and communal sharing exhibited in the West African culture. Therefore, African American students may become bored and feel the school is unstimulating (Boykin, 1978; Gay, 2010). Whereas, when a cultural match (same cultural group) exists, cultural familiarity is present, causing more freedom and interactions between the student and the teacher. In the current study, participants addressed their experiences with cultural match and their teacher-student interactions with racial mismatch teachers.

Race Based Treatment

Academically, unfair race-based treatment contributes to student performance and declining minority grades (Berkel et al., 2010; DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Neblett, et al., 2006). Wong et al., (2003) clarified the point that discrimination damages the motivation to do well academically. Failure among African American males has been associated with the lack of motivation, hopelessness, and the will to continue when faced with the potential to fail (Hale-Benson, 1986). Therefore, a need to understand both the

social and emotional needs of African American males (Chavous et al., 2008). Research also has found that perceptions of competence and outcome expectancy predict successful school completion as early as sixth grade (Eccles et al., 2004; Jacobs et al., 2002). Irvine (1990) asserted that some students could feel isolated by teachers. Therefore, teachers' perception can contribute to students' self-concept, causing them to give up and not want to be in school. The unfair treatment of minority students is likely to increase academic disengagement (Benner & Graham, 2011).

Teachers must believe in African American students and have high expectations for their academic success (Carter, 1982). The lack of value given to African American students' race can affect their education by tracking them into remedial or special education classes (Douglas et al., 2008; Dillard, 2019). Therefore, understanding the culture of students helps create success and feelings of belonging (Irvine, 1990). Douglas et al. (2008) took the position that understanding students' cultural views can eliminate misinterpretation of verbal and nonverbal cues, which may lead to adverse outcomes based on the systematic biases in teachers' perceptions and expectations. In the current study, students share their perspectives about contributing factors of success and failure.

Negative Teacher Perspectives

In their discussion of stereotypes due to African American sounding names, students like Jamal, Deshawn, or Darnell are often interpreted as troublemakers by their European American teachers (Holbrook et al. 2016; University of California Los Angeles, 2015). In contrast, if the student's name is Connor, Wyatt, or Garrett, the students are assumed to be nonthreatening (Holbrook et al., 2016). Equally important is a

study that advanced the notion that teachers have higher expectations for students with European American sounding names. Whereas students with ethnic-sounding names may experience teachers who have negative unconscious patterns that may contribute to African American males' negative experiences in traditional classroom settings (Anderson-Clark et al., 2008). Yale University child study center of over 130 teachers observed children in a classroom setting via video clips to identify behavior issues (Brown, 2016). Unaware that the video featured actors and that there were no behavior issues present, the results show the following:

- African American males were observed 42% by the educators

- European American males were observed 34% by educators

- Educators believe that African American males needed more attention when observing the behavior

The study concluded that educators might be acting on stereotypes about African American boys. Therefore, implicit racial bias may be present (Brown, 2016; Walter et al., 2016).

On the other hand, researchers investigating racial mismatch conclude that African American teachers who have students of color are less likely to report seeing a behavior problem, and more likely to report positive evaluations (Gershenson, et al., 2016). Furthermore, African American teachers who teach European American students report positive evaluations (Gershenson, et al., 2016). European American teachers report more behavioral issues of African American students than do African American teachers report in predominantly African American schools (Gershenson, et al., 2016).

Earlier racial mismatch research findings show decades of negative teacher perspectives exist in elementary, middle, and high school levels in how they react to low socioeconomic status students (Alexander et al., 1987). Therefore, the teacher's status governs how they react to low status students. Negative teachers' viewpoint is an indication that racial inequalities exist in the classroom (Alexander et al., 1987; Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Ehrenberg et al., 1995; Morris, 2005; Sbarra, & Pianta, 2001). Renzulliet al. (2011) adds that European American teachers' satisfaction when teaching a majority of minority students is less satisfied with their jobs than when they teach a majority of European American students. Whereas African American teachers do not have the same affinity when teaching same race students. The current study gave participants the opportunity to address their major obstacles in school.

Mistrust

Irving and Hudley (2005) suggested that mistrust is detrimental to academic functioning. The negative perceptions of students and mistrust of teachers can affect the outcome of students' grades (Alexander et al., 1987). By middle school, African American male students begin to believe they will be mistreated mistreated due to prior bias and unfair treatment (Yeager et al., 2014). As a result, adolescent African American males begin to conceptualize negative personal experiences as they get older in comparison to when they are younger (Killenet al., 2007). Studies among African American students' academic success are concerned with developing mistrust in school and society due to negative stereotypes (Yeager et al., 2014). Academically, African Americans males do not need the motivation to do well in school (Yeager et al., 2014).

Instead, they have concerns about the importance of investing their time and efforts in academics that may cause them to experience biased treatment (Yeager et al., 2014). In the current study, students can address their teacher-student relationship related to mistrust and academic success.

Cool Pose

Cool pose was coined by Majors and Billson (1992) coined cool pose to examine the mannerisms of inner-city/urban youths. Evidence regarding cool pose show that it is often misread by teachers, principals, and police officers as a demonstration of defiance. Despite the appearance of defiant behavior, psychologists who have studied African American youth have interpreted their behaviors as a way to maintain a sense of integrity and a way to suppress frustrations and feelings of not experiencing esteem and success (Majors & Billson, 1992). In addition, cool pose, (the individual style that African American males use to express themselves in their walk, talk, hair, and clothes), can be both positive and negative, as it allows African American males to deal with the circumstances that they find themselves in (Majors & Billson, 1992). It is a coping mechanism used to help to dispel negative images portrayed in society. Due to the flashy clothing, chains, and mannerisms, cool pose is often misread by teachers and principals (Goleman, 1992). The premise of cool pose is to portray that the individual is in control, regardless of the present situation in American society (Majors & Bilson, 1992)

Neal et al. (2003) conducted a study investigating the perception and reactions of 136 middle school teachers who viewed a videotape and completed a questionnaire based on African American male cultural movement styles. Based on the video, the student's

movement styles indicate the teachers perceived African American students had lower achievement, higher aggression, and are more likely to need special education services than students with standard movement styles. Neal (1997) characterized walking styles as standard or nonstandard. For example, a standard walking style is primarily used among European American youth and can be defined as walking with a straight posture, head straight with a pace. Whereas a nonstandard walking style (also referred to as a "stroll") is used by some African American youth. For example, stylized movement is often called the "cool pose," an intentional swaggered with the head held slightly tilted to the side, one foot dragging, and an exaggerated knee bend (dip). Therefore, when expressing the cool pose in a school setting African American males gain acceptance from their peers by working below standards (Hall, 2009). In addition to displaying cool pose with peers, teachers of a different race, may interpret their mannerisms as threatening and thus put the teacher on edge (Neal et al., 2003). African American males feel they can guard themselves, masking their true feelings by forming a wall to protect against a world in which they are believed to be violent and troublemakers. Further, the cool pose movement might cause the misinterpretation of educators of a different race to conclude that African American males are thuggish and are not interested in their academic success (Majors & Billson, 1992). In the current study, African American male participants addressed their interest in school and the perception or views of them in the classroom.

Academics and Stereotypes

Brown (2009) creates an understanding of the interplay between structural, cultural, and individual factors that contribute to the academic success of African

American boys. The lived experiences of middles school males who are taught by teachers of a different race are crucial to understanding the educational relationship when different races exist as teacher and student. Also, the teacher relationship with the student is reduced when the teacher's view students' cultural backgrounds as barriers to instruction (Lee & Loeb, 2000). For example, stereotypic images suggest that African Americans are not as intelligent as European American (Fordham, 1996; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). These widely circulating stereotypes may influence teacher expectations of students based on their racial classification. Cultural barriers may inhibit teacher-student relationships and may be translated into a self-fulling prophecy, resulting in students performing poorly in school (Jussim et al., 1996).

There is other evidence which indicates that negative stereotyping is another factor that has affected African American middles school males' performance in school (Steele, 1997). The results indicated the internalization of negative results had adverse effects on their academic success. The current study investigates the relationship between African American middle school males' relationship with teachers of a different race and the effect it has on academic success.

Similarly, stereotyping can significantly impair the promotion of positive images of students of color. Dominant forms of stereotyping shaped through media and motion pictures depict African American adolescents as being angry, hostile, and violence can result in them being seen as threatening and non-intellectual (Carby, 1998; Davis & Jordan, 1994; Fujioka, 1999; Sue & Sue, 1990). The results of stereotyping are not based

on logic, yet it can affect the teacher's expectations of students of color. Which in turn, lead to the characterization and differential treatment of minority students.

According to researchers (Honora, 2002; Roderick, 2003; Swanson et al., 2003) evidence shows that African American males are treated more negatively than European American by teachers and peers. As iterated prior, even African Americans' walking styles and movements through media promotion presents African Americans in a way that evokes fear in the general population (Carby, 1998; Neal et al. 2003).

On the other hand, teachers tend to respond favorably to behavior that mirrors the dominant cultural norms. Therefore, if a student behaves in a way that diverts from the teacher's European standards, this may be viewed as unacceptable and not meeting high academic standards. This is especially true for African American males as evidenced by labels such as "at-risk" and more likely to be classified as learning disabled in special education classes (Ford, 2011). Students must know that their teachers are active participants in their education. When this occurs their academic performance, rates has a greater likelihood of success (Oakes, 2005; Pollard, 1993). In the current study, the participants addressed what they want their educators to know concerning their success in the classroom.

Academic Expectations

Gershenson et al. (2016) presented a clear explanation of teacher expectations. For example, only 5% of African American teachers believed that African American students would not graduate from high school, whereas 12% of European American teachers believed African American male students would not obtain a high school

diploma. In addition to teacher graduation expectations, African American male 10th grade students are less likely to enroll in a class if the teacher is European American. It has been noted that the anticipation of biased outcomes can affect students' educational viewpoint (Gershenson, et al., 2016). Hence, students are left with fewer opportunities for exposure to advanced academics than their counterparts are (Atwater, 2000; Entwisleet al., 2007; Farkas, 2003; Oates, 2003). Therefore, if teachers believe that African American male students' outcomes are predetermined, then little effort is expended to reach these children.

Further evidence of teacher prejudices suggests (Hamilton et al., 1990; Jussim, 1986, 1991; Rist, 1970) that children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are judged more favorably than their counterparts. Thus, a teacher's expectations may be linked with student performance results (Good, 1987). In the current study, students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds shared their teacher's expectations and their teachers' expectations and academic performance.

Poverty and Education

Studies in the field on closing the gap between African American students and their peers are concerned with the lack of progress (Roach, 2004). Educational researchers show that minority groups from deprived areas receive lower academic outcomes in grades, standardized test scores, and higher dropout rates (Osborne, 1999). African American males significantly lag in all academic measures (Public Impact, 2018). For example, African American males are less likely to be proficient, be on grade level, reach benchmarks that lead to academic success and college readiness (Public

Impact, 2018). During the 2017-18 school year, 30 % of third through eighth grade

African American students scored college-ready (Public Impact, 2018). Even when

African American males are given the same educational opportunities, they still lag

behind their peers (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Berliner (2013) adds,

the only way to improve the educational disparity of students is to narrow the income

field by providing equal economic opportunities for families. The focus of the field has

been on the impact of concentrated poverty on education. Jensen (2009) suggests poverty

also impacts student in the following areas: (a) Habitual tardiness; (b) The lack of

motivation; (c) Influences inappropriate behaviors (McNeil et al., 2002); (d) Disrespect to

others; (e) The use of profanity.

To further the point on poverty, the 2013 data collected by National Center for

Educational Statistics showed 2000 participants from four states represented students

benefit from free and reduced lunch (Suitts, 2013). The study cites every southern state

except Virginia and Maryland (Suitts, 2013). Twelve percent of European American

students live in concentrated poverty areas, while nearly half of the African American

students are poor and more likely to attend school with classmates who are also poor.

Whereas children from affluent schools are more knowledgeable, stay in school, are in

less trouble than children enrolled in poor schools (Jenck & Mayer, 1990).

Public Impact reported (2018) that a Stanford study's data reports African

American males to attend 55% low-income schools. The schools with the widest gaps are

two school districts, Chapel Hill and Carrboro City Schools in North Carolina and

Berkeley Unified School District in California. This presents an uneven playing field

where educational obtainment exists. Based on the ideas expressed by Sablich (2016) race and income are determinate factors for African American student's lower educational opportunities. As previously mentioned, minority students in the United States continue to receive different educational experiences based on racial and social differences. McKown and Weinstein (2008) demonstrated an insightful observation that classroom inequalities do exist. McKown and Weinstein (2008) suggested that if students of color have equal opportunities, the field is narrowed substantially.

In areas where African American students experience low socioeconomic status specifically, there tend to be less experienced teachers and a lack of support staff (Aud et al., 2010). Therefore, teachers may have to shoulder more nonrelated teacher responsibilities, such as a counselor or nurse.

Socioeconomic Status and Educational Issues

Reardon et al. (2017) suggested that a student's socioeconomic status and how students are perceived and treated by the adults who work with them in schools. Analyses indicate that, when there are higher African Americans and Hispanic populations (demographic composition), the quality of the school, or school segregation academics gaps are larger when there are higher racial differences and exposure to poverty (Reardon et al., 2017). This suggests that race, per se, is not the causal factor linking segregation to worse outcomes for minority students. Rather, racial isolation is correlated with other negative conditions such as exposure to more low-income peers, more crime, fewer positive role models, schools with fewer resources, etc. Low-income, negative concepts of adults, and their views of low socioeconomic students' academic ability can occur

even before the teacher has met them; therefore, if the teacher knows the neighborhood the students live in their perception may change (Garcia et al., 2010; Miller, Kuykendall, & Thomas, 2013). Concerning low socioeconomic students' academic ability. Academic success is important for immigrant families (Monzo & Rueda, 2003); Altugan (2015). Immigrant families want their children to succeed, but the desire to succeed may not match academic success. Recent studies reveal that even when children grow up in the same area and their parents have similar incomes, African American males fare worse academically than their counterparts in 99% of the United States. Among the schools struggling are Urban schools in the United States (Kuo et al., 2018). Over half of the 24 million African American and Latino students in the United States attend a poverty school (Public Impact, 2018). While, in predominately affluent (rich) schools' students rank four grade levels above poor districts (Kuo et al., 2018). In North Carolina, poverty rates are as low as 14% and 18.5% in the research community (The United States Census Bureau, 2019). In addition, North Carolina's poverty rate is the highest in the nation. Also, Kennedy (2019) adds that one in five children in North Carolina lives in poverty. Lareau and Goyette (2014) add that family economic circumstances can affect housing segregation patterns. This pattern suggests that African American and Hispanic children live in poorer neighborhoods, relative to European American children (Logan, 2011; Reardon et al., 2015). Therefore, on average poorer neighborhoods typically mean less availability of quality pre-school and afterschool programs these conditions may affect educational obtainment (Small, 2006). The question arises, would test scores improve for

African American students if they moved to less distressed areas (Burdick-Will & Ludwick, 2010).

According to Harris (2010), if school racial composition was correlated with school resources, fewer resources were available to school districts serving large proportions of African American, Hispanic, and poor children. But those serving predominantly European American and middle-class students received more resources. Therefore, African American and Hispanic students may experience a lack of skilled teachers, support staff, and instructional materials, fewer opportunities for learning than their European American peers. Thus, school segregation tends to widen racial educational disparities in achievement and educational attainment, as well as adult income (Ashenfelter et al., 2005; Card and Rothstein 2007; Guryan 2004; Johnson, 2011; Reardon 2016). In the current study, students addressed their school experience and middle school this year.

High-Density School Population and Low Achievement

Researchers have attempted to delineate the existing educational gap between African American male students and their European American peers during the past several decades. Few investigations have evaluated the connection between the low achievement of African American male students and the relationship between the composition of the school. Bohrnstedt et al. (2015) addressed the African American / European American achievement gap when there is a higher density of the African American student in the school population. For example, the average African American student attends schools with a population density of 48% African Americans (The

National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Whereas the average European American

attend schools where only 9% of the student population is African American. In

reviewing the research, the literature indicates that geographically, the higher the density

of African American student population (60-100%) describe in the South, Midwest and

cities indicate achievement gaps. In contrast, the lower density occurred in rural areas

(Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). The National Center for Education Statistics (2011) concluded

that nationally when there is a larger density of African American students attending

school with other African Americans there are lower incidences of academic

achievement. The National Center for Education Statistics (2011) suggested that African

American population density influences academics.

In seeking to understand low performance among African American male

students, researchers have raised questions about the possible connection between school

characteristics, the complexities of student demographics and the achievement gap (Fiel,

2013). According to Aud et al. (2010), explanations of the effects of low performance

among schools with a large concentration of African American students can be associated

with incidences of lower performance due to low expectations from the teacher (Chang,

2011). Also, Diamond et al. (2004) presented a clear explanation of the association

between teachers' beliefs about students and their capabilities. For example, in low

income schools more emphasis is placed on the student's deficits rather than their

academic capabilities (Diamond et al., 2004). In contrast when students are middle class,

teachers feel accountable for those students to learn. Therefore Diamond et al. add that in

schools where African Americans are predominant or the school is low income, the

teachers have lower expectations. In addition to performance, student and teacher relationship levels can begin to erode, resulting in low academic achievement (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). Assumptions about low performance among African American middle school males can be extracted from the Pygmalion effect. As mentioned prior, the Pygmalion effect means whatever students think a teacher expects of them, they will live up to the expected outcome. For example, when teachers expect their students to excel, then students tend to excel (Chang, 2011). Therefore, the teacher's expectations work as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Chang, 2011).

Although research findings show that socially as well as academically, there are few benefits to holding a student back; the United States Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection 2011-12 suggests that ninth grade African American students are held back 12% while only 4% of European American students are held back a diploma (The United States Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011-12). Based on the documentation, the question arises whether being held back contributes to the increase in African American dropout rate before earning a high school diploma (The United States Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011-12). Closing the racial gap in learning is essential. Based on the evidence of Levy et al. (2016) racial discrimination may be at the forefront of the educational gap between African American students and their counterparts. The educational gap reveals that the average student of color entering 12th grade is at the same proficiency as a European American middle school student. Subsequently, the educational gap has now become a great educational divide between African American students and their counterparts.

In the mandated Civil Rights Act of 1964, an examination of the quality of schools attended by African American students and the difference in schools attended by European American reported that 12th grade African American students placed in the 13th percentile of the score distributed, whereas 87% of European American placed ahead of the average African American 12th grader (Camera, 2016). Using data from over 600,000 students and teachers in various states throughout the United States found that academic achievement was related to the social makeup of the school rather than the quality of the school the student attended (Kiviat, 2000). Thus, busing students outside of their community occurred, but the results did not produce the predicted outcomes of higher test scores, but there was a minimal change of 2-3% in the dropout rate for African American boys where desegregation exists (Guryan, 2004).

After 60 years, after Brown vs. Board of Education, school systems in the United States are unequal and the education gap continues to persist. In 2013, the National Assessment for Educational Progress places 12th graders only in the 19th percentile (Caliendo, 2018). Therefore, after a half-century the progress remains slow. The average African American student scores at just the 22nd percentile. The Landmark Education report calls the report a national embarrassment (Hanushek, 2014). Hanushek (2014) estimates that at this rate of frequency, the achievement gap will continue two and a half centuries before the Black/White math gap decreases and one-half century until the reading gap narrows.

More attention is being devoted to language and the education gap in minorities. Specifically, Gassaway (2017) identified the problem of cultural disadvantages and

provided insights into the impact of language testing and assessments on low income students. With respect to language, he used the word yacht to examine the difference that a low-income student may have in identifying the word; a student in a higher economic status was familiar with the word because of his environmental clues (Gassaway, 2017). Therefore, the student's ability to answer certain questions on a standardized test for example, may be impeded upon when questions connected to a different culture occur (Sosa, 2011). Thus, cultural bias in standardized testing exists because the student does not understand the question being asked, because of their culture, not their intellectual ability (Savage, 2009).

Transition to Middle School

Research investigating the effects of transitioning to middle school found that students in North Carolina were suspended and later repeated a grade or dropped out of school when they attended six-grade in middle school (Brown Center Report on American Education, 2017). This pattern of suspended and later repeating a grade or dropping out continued throughout their experience. Whereas students in a New York study who attended six-grade in an elementary school, did not experience negative transitional trauma experienced by attending six-grade in a middle school (Brown Center Report on American Education, 2017). Lastly, Brown Center Report on American Education (2017) added there was no impact on their academic achievement.

Many studies suggest that African American males experience greater stressors than their counterparts when transitioning to middle school (e.g., Barber & Olsen, 2004; Dotterer, McHale, & Crouter, 2009; Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Barber

and Olsen (2004) suggest that there are significant challenges in middle school which may cause African American males to decrease in academic success. As a result, decreasing grade point averages is a crucial component contributing to the transition from elementary school to secondary school. The transition may also increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior (Barber & Olsen, 2004). For example, Eccles and Roeser, 2009; Eccles et al., (1993) noted that the transition may be difficult because the students must adjust to academic as well as social adjustments.

A shift in social and peer groups occur during this transition period also. Consequently, friendships and the social status the student held before middle school must develop in his new surroundings (Bukowski et al., 2000; Seidman et al., 1994; Hongling et al., 2006). Another consideration to consider is that African American students may evoke a persona of being more physically aggressive than their European American classmates. Under this transition, aggression appears to increase (Xie et al., 2013). Graham and Juvonen (2002) note that aggression is a way for African American student to compete for status. The perception of this aggressive conduct of African American male students may be interpreted suggests that they are more likely than their peers to be rated as disruptive and therefore, experience school disciplinary consequences (Eccles & Roeser, 2009).

In the *Trouble with Black Boys*, Noguera (2003) focused on the need to approach behavior patterns as it relates to Black boys. The need for social change is apparent and necessary. African American males expect to be provided with a meaningful education that is reflective of their interest, abilities, and culture. To iterate the point further,

research by Green, White, and Green (2012) suggested that one-third of the United States' students are African American males. Some do well, live productive lives, and enter into leadership positions. Often, they live in a two-parent family environment, while many others who live in impoverished areas do not (Casserly, 2012). Therefore, there must be a positive change in this area. Strategies must be put into place to add to the overall worth of African American students. Additional research has shown that students are often from low-income areas, (neighborhoods) single-parent family units or students are often from low-income areas, (neighborhoods) single-parent family units or live with grandparents who maintain the family unit. Generationally these students have seen, heard, or experienced a certain way of life and are frustrated. In this study, participants addressed the transition to middle school, what they like about middle school and what they do not like.

Special Education and Retention

The U.S. Department of Education (2016) showed a large number of minority children labeled as mentally retarded and placed in special education. African American males were disproportionately suspended, expelled, and pushed out of school (Smith, 2004). The increase in grade-level retentions, suspensions, and placement in special education programs increased the drop-out rate. Therefore, race gender, and school-level have a relationship to suspension rates. Repeated suspensions have been linked to academic failure, negative views of schooling, grade retention and dropout rates (Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

African Americans represent less than 14% of American youth under the age of 18. Serrano (2018) added, African American males make up 43% population in juvenile facilities, Landrum et al. (2014) established a connection between the vulnerability of African American males due to academic difficulties, behavior issues in school, and the school to prison pipeline (juvenile justice system). Blackwell (2008) indicated that ninth-grade school retention in the United States is the most, regarding any other grade level (K-12) in their academic experience. Also, Morris (2014) tested the impact of retainment on African American males and found that one in five African Americans students will be retained in elementary or middle school (Carter & Welner, 2013). The results are the highest of all other groups (Morris, 2014). Thus, the literature suggests some relationship between school retention and the increased probability of dropping out before high school graduation. Pharris-Ciurej et al. (2012) expressed the view that failure is not simply a poor grade on an exam but being held back to repeat a grade and the possibility of dropping out of school. Pharris-Ciurej et al. (2012) presented a description of first time ninth graders; of the those enrolled 14% will be enrolled in 9th grade again the following year, while another 14% were no longer enrolled. Pharris-Ciurej et al. (2012) conclude in their findings that less than 50% of students who begin 9th grade will complete four years later.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006) 6th graders who are retained had lower achievement than similar students who were not retained. Also, retained students have the likelihood of dropping out of school. In addition, students who drop out are five times likely to have been retained than those who graduate (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Students who are retained during their school career range from 10 to 20%. African American students are twice as likely to be retained than European American students, and boys are twice as likely as girls (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006; Musu-Gillette, et al., 2017). Roderick and Nagaoka (2005) suggested that for most students struggling to keep up, retention was not a satisfactory solution, norwas promotion. If the goal of retention is to provide an opportunity for failing students to catch up, the quality and appropriateness of their academic experiences is likely to be the determining factor. Therefore, repeating the same experiences does not produce a different result. Thus, a duplicate of an entire school year, does not seem like the solution (Roderick & Nagaoka, 2005).

It has been shown that grade-level retention is least effective to improve academic success, yet it is continually used as a way to improve the academics of the learner (Larsen & Akmal, 2007). The susceptibility of dropping out of school earlier than their peers, adds to the disproportionate rate of African American males confined in juvenile detention centers (Pope, & Feyerherm, 1990; Mooradian, 2010; Pope & Snyder, 2004; Townsend Walker, 2012). Some parallels are readily apparent to the retention and the increased high school drop-out rate (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Miyako and García (2014) suggested that the result of retention adds to discouragement and lack of motivation as students anticipate enduring the same curriculum again. To eliminate expulsions of African American students, there is a need in the educational system to value their culture, abilities and incorporate it into the curriculum, as part of their teaching process (Baratz & Baratz, 1969). For example, if the African American male

does not know his cultural heritage and believes that his race has not advanced in the

sciences, arts, and music, how then is he expected to excel (Marable, 1990, p.19)? The

role of a teacher in educating African American males, must convey to the student

respect, understanding and show he is valued. Marable (1990) adds if a teacher is to

eliminate racism, one must leave racism and political stance at the door. Also, if one is to

educate African American males successfully, schools must eliminate the problems that

they are facing. That means that educators must understand their learning styles for them

to advance. Ladson-Billings (2000) cited that teacher programs do not prepare teachers to

meet the needs of African American students. Kunjufu (2002) further the point that the

need for teacher preparedness in college to help teacher teach African American males is

needed. This will incur the training of perspective as well as current educators who hold

the belief that this will bring about a positive social change for society as a whole

(Marable, 1990). Ladson-Billings (2000) further the point that teacher programs do not

prepare teachers to meet the needs of African American students. In the current study, the

participants addressed factors that may cause a student to give up and not want to learn.

Summary and Conclusion

A recurrent theme in the literature is the crisis of African American male's

educational achievement in public education. Statistics continue to show the decreasing

scores in proficiency levels compared to their peers. Subsequently, there is an increase in

dropout rates. Even though African American males in urban schools dominate the

population, teachers of another race are teaching them in the classroom (Rogers-Ard et

al., 2013). European American females dominate the teaching force, but they often live in

different communities than their students. Rogers-Ard, Knaus et al. (2013) add that this reduces students of color exposure to teachers who look like them. Many urban children attend schools with teachers of color who are in low-paying positions, or the only people of color the students encounter are custodians, paraprofessionals, and secretaries. The lack of role models in school settings can add to a racially biased curriculum, resulting in only half of the minority population graduating on time (Stillwell, 2010).

Research has found that negative perspectives have existed for decades. As a result, the continual disparity in educational advancement may contribute to the racial mismatch in the classroom. In addition to racial mismatching, infractions are different for minority students than for European American students. Unfair discrimination treatment and stereotyping of African American males may add to their lower-grade patterns, thus adding to students' negative school experiences (Delgado, 1988; Leath et al., 2019).

A review of the literature illustrates that African American students represent the majority in urban public schools, yet people who are not of their cultural or racial group are educating them. Eighty percent of educators are European American, while only 12% of the teachers are African American (Lewis, 2006; United States Department of Education, 2004; McFarland et al., 2019; Williams, 2019). Furthermore, African American students aged 11-14, are more likely to learn if a same-race teacher educates them.

African American males progress academically when taught by someone from their race. In the review of literature, findings of earlier studies agree that teachers who teach African America middle school males must understand their cultural learning styles

and adapt to the student as you help them advance academically (Pearson, 2016). This will incur the training of perspective and current educators who believe that the student must adapt to them. According to most of the literature produced on this subject, African Americans students have been educated the same way the dominant race has been. The results continue to show many minority children labeled as mentally retarded and placed in special education (Smith, 2004). Often, they are suspended, expelled and pushed out of school (Hale-Benson, 1986). African American students need an educational system that values their culture and abilities and incorporates it into the curriculum, which values their culture and abilities and incorporates it into the curriculum as part of their teaching process (Baratz & Baratz, 1969). The role of a teacher in educating African American males must convey to the student respect, understanding and show he is valued. If a teacher is to eliminate racism, one must leave racism and political stance at the door. If one is to educate African American males successfully, schools must eliminate the problems (racism) they face.

An area that needs to be explored is the educational perspective of African American middle school males taught by teachers of a different race. Most researchers on educating African American middle school males focus on the criminality of the boys. Of relevance here are the 1.5 million African American boys who are disconnected from their educational experiences. Researchers have raised questions about, what occurs in their educational experiences that causes their potential to learn to come to an abrupt stop, but have not considered.

The present study filled the existing gap in the literature by capturing the educational experiences and share the lived experiences of African American middle school males taught by educators of a different race. None of the existing studies focus attention on issues of racial mismatching, the cultural meaning of behavior, or educational experiences related to the perspective of African American middle school males. The findings provided data that is specific to African American middle school male students. The results also contributed a personal look, through participants' eyes, as they share their feelings about being mismatched with their teachers racially in the classroom and the effect it has on their academic success. Previous studies provide vast data on minority disparities in education, but none has grasped the importance of what is occurring (positively and negatively) in the perceptions of African American males when taught by a teacher of different races. By understanding how students perceive and interact with their racially mismatched teachers, the current study's participants provided a perspective that has been missing in the literature.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the purpose of the study, the design, the role I played as the researcher, the instruments used and data analysis plan, and the basic qualitative research design In Chapter 3 I also discuss the population of the study, and detailed descriptions of the components of how the data were collected, basic information on the site, and how I analyzed the data. In Chapter 4 I provide a description of the demographics of the study's participants, the study findings/ themes that emerged from the educational experiences of the middle school males. Lastly, Chapter 5 interprets the findings of a population's lived

experiences. I describe the limitations of the study, add recommendations for the research

findings and implications for social change, followed by my closing remarks.

Chapter 3

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a detailed description of the components of the study's research design. First, I describe the purpose of the study and why a qualitative design is appropriate. Then, I turn the attention to describing the unit of analysis, the relationship between me and the context, and the rationale for choosing the site. Next, I describe how I collected the data, basic information about the site and how I analyzed the data. Finally, I discussed issues of quality and ethical considerations.

Purpose of the Study

In the current qualitative research study, I examined the lived educational experiences of African American middle school male participants who were taught by teachers of a different race, in public school settings. Also, the study aimed to gain an understanding of the learned perspectives of each participant as they relate to academic success and racial mismatching. This perspective facilitated breaking through the silence associated with the connection between African American middle school males lack of academic success and racial mismatching in the classroom.

Research Method

The present study was a basic qualitative design (Merriam, 2009); a qualitative design attempts to examined a person's perceptions relevant to a phenomenon in greater detail (Fick, 2018; Merriman, 2016; Patton, 2015: Creswell, 2007). The most common sources of qualitative data included interviews, observations, and documents (Patton, 2002; Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016).

The selection of using a qualitative approach allowed me to interview the participants and document the variations in how each student responded (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, interviewing was a source of gaining understanding of the lived and existential meanings of several individuals (Van Manen, 2003). Since the purpose of the research study was to explore the lived experiences of a phenomenon, a basic qualitative approach in general seemed appropriate. McCracken (1988) solidified the need for qualitative interviews which are described by the respondent's experience. In addition, a basic qualitative research approach was chosen for this study because of its emergent nature and its suitability for exploratory purposes (Almeida, 2012). The interview process explored how African American males perceived teachers of a different race and constructed their educational experiences in middle school. Using the lens of African American middle school males, the goal uncovered emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings of African middle school males' educational experiences (Patton, 2002).

I solicited participants through fliers distributed through African American churches, through the technique of snowballing, and I incorporated online recruitment. African American middle school aged participants (males only) were selected from one county, located in the Southeastern, United States. The five participants and two students solicited for the pilot, were asked 10-15 questions relating to their perspectives, challenges, and solutions on academic experiences while being taught by teachers of a different race. I collected data from interviewing the participants selected for the study,

then the data of the participants lived experiences was analyzed through coding and the development of themes.

Research Question

In the current qualitative study, the following research question (RQ) was addressed. RQ1: What is the lived academic experience of middle school African American males when taught by teachers of different races?

The research tradition used for the study was a basic qualitative study involving the lived experiences of African American middle school males attending school in rural and urban areas (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, I chose the research tradition that explored the participants' thoughts on a topic (Patton, 1990).

Role of the Researcher

I recognized that as the interviewer and researcher I was in a position of power concerning the participants. They may have viewed me as a person of privilege because most of the students participating were middle school students with ages varying between 12-14 for the research study and two middle school participants aged 12-14 for the research pilot. (Almeida, 2012).

Punch (2005) noted that research involved the collection of data from people about people. Research also involved, building trust and maintaining the integrity of the study (Israel & Hay, 2006). Israel and Hay (2006) furthered the point when a climate of trust, integrity, honesty and ethical behavior is present people are willing to contribute to research. As a researcher, I protected the participants by avoiding any misconduct that reflected negatively on the educational institution and the importance of the results of the

study (Israel & Hay, 2006). I had no personal or professional relationships with the 7 respondents chosen for the pilot (2) and research study (5).

Stadtlander (2015) noted the researcher naturally comes into a study with biases and opinions of what might happen in the study. As a member of the same population being studied (African American) and having worked in the public school system for over ten years, I needed to manage existing viewpoints To manage my viewpoint, I approached participants in the study neutrally (Stadtlander, 2015). Also, another strategy to manage biases consisted of journaling emotions as they come up during the interview process (Stadtlander, 2015).

I did not utilize member checks because children were used in my study. To facilitate data collection accuracy and ensure that my findings were as consistent as possible, I summarized what was said to confirm that what the participant provided was reflective of their experiences (Loh, 2013). This procedure was viewed by Guba and Lincoln (1989) as the most important critical technique for establishing credibility.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The population of interest I selected consisted of African American males who attend middle school in the Southeastern, United States. The males in the study ranged from age 12-14.

Setting and Sample

A basic qualitative research study was designed to investigate participants' direct experiences of how they viewed the world (Merriam, 2009). In addition, the research

inquiry explored the actual experiences and what it meant to the participants. (Worthington, n.d). The interviews lasted approximately a half-hour to one hour. The data collection relied on 10-15 standardized open-ended questions asked during a general interview guide approach. Therefore, the same questions were asked, and then I analyzed and compared the interviews (McNamara, 1999). Data saturation was reached when there was no new information discovered in data analysis (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

To reach a specific target group, I focused on a pre-selected criterion based on the research question. Furthermore, through purposeful sampling, I selected persons specific to the topic. Two participants were selected for the pilot study to evaluate feasibility. It answered the question whether the research should be conducted as planned or should be altered (Cadete, 2017).

Jacob and Furgerson (2012) suggested that even though there are many techniques for interviewing, at the heart of qualitative research is the art of understanding the human part of the story. To pursue in-depth information, I used a semi-structured qualitative approach to interviewing to gain information that was not easily observed (Merriam, 2016). Because asking questions and getting answers may be a difficult task for the first-time qualitative researcher, I used an interview protocol consisting of a script of what I was to say during the interviews. Fontana and Frey (2000) reiterated that the interview protocol for the first-time qualitative researcher was an important procedural guide. In the beginning, it reminded me of critical details about the study. For example, explaining informed consent and confidentiality. In the end, if there was a need to clarify information, a prompt was used (Schwandt, 1997).

The criteria for selecting the seven students was based on their ethnicity, age, and grade. Therefore, the participants of this research were based on being African American, of middle school age and males whom teachers of a different race teach. The participants lived within the region of the Southeastern, United States. Also, students were selected based on their knowledge about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest, being taught by a teacher of a different race. I conducted a pre-interview with the students prior to their commitment to the study; participants were selected based on those who could articulate their lived experiences with depth and clarity (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Study Participants Selection

I identified a total of seven African American middle school male participants at which time saturation was reached. Two of the participants in the research were included in the pilot, as no changes were made based on the pilot, their data was included in the main study. The participants were selected from the Southeastern part of the United States Because my study participants attended one of four middle school locations, in the Southeastern part of the United States, I made sure that I had as much homogeneity as possible.

I organized and rehearsed the interviewing process; therefore, before the formal study, two African American students attending middle school were selected to participate in a pilot test before the research study. A pilot test was crucial for the research design. It allowed me to have a pre-testing of the questions that were to be asked. For example, it allowed me to observe if a question gave a range of responses (Teijlingen van et al., 2001). Also, it helped me to distinguish questions that needed

rewording or revising (Teijlingen van et al., 2001). No changes were made to the protocol based upon the pilot.

Participant Recruitment Procedure

My systematic recruiting plan was as followed: I contacted the secretary of African American churches by phone. I chose churches central to the area of Southeastern, United States. Next, I asked if I could meet with them concerning the possible student interest in my study. When I met with the secretary, I presented the purpose of the study, left the invitation fliers (See Appendix D), and forms. The forms included the procedures for participants, brief information about the study, informed consent (See Appendix A), a discussion about the voluntary nature of the study, ethical considerations, and confidentiality. Through the technique of snowballing, I recruited future participants from among their acquaintances, lastly, I incorporated online recruitment. After distributing the fliers to solicit participants, I asked local African American churches to virtually distribute the flier, African American clubs, and announcement boards recruitment for the study.

Interview Protocol

According to Creswell (1998), observing or collecting artifacts alone cannot capture the essence of an experience; conducting interviews is necessary in phenomenological studies. Therefore, I captured the dimensions of the students' experiences by recording anecdotes (stories) that illustrated their lived experiences (Van Manen, 2016). I collected the participants' narratives, reflections, and thoughts about being educated by a teacher of a different race. My goal was to bring the participants'

experiences to life. I utilized Seidman's (1998; 2006) interview recommendations in my research study.

Video Conferencing

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted interviews via video conferencing. I conducted 10-15 semi-structured open-ended interviews questions with each student. The interviews lasted approximately a half to one hour each. I asked the participants' parents for their informed consent signature prior to the Zoom video conferencing, I also asked the student for their assent form. Even though Zoom has a recording option, I used a separate taping device to avoid having participants be able to be identified. I then started the interview according to my protocol (see Appendix D). I used prompting techniques to gather clarification, amplification, or illustration of the student's statements. This allowed me to capture critical elements of the discourse, which allowed the student's ideas and thoughts to be analyzed fully. If the students were not talkative, I repeated the questions to capture their lived experiences.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the use of the Public Library meeting room was the planned site to conduct the interviews. The restrictions were not lifted during the time of my interviews; therefore, all interviews were conducted using the Zoom platform. A digital voice recorder preserved the respondents' as they commented. The digital file served as a source that transferred data to another device, for future transcribing. After I interviewed, the files were sent to a transcriptionist, who then converted the recording to a text document.

Data Collection Instrument

Before the interviews process, I designed a script (see Appendix C) to know what I planned to say. The pre-scripted prompts helped to probe into specific areas that were necessary for the enhancement of the study as well as areas the interviewee did not mention. It also helped me to stay on track by managing time. To ensure that my instrument was proficient based on the pilot study conducted before the research study. The pilot was conducted with middle school aged students, I tested the measurement instrument by asking the students open-ended questions as they shared their experiences (post middle school). Also, the pilot provided insight into potential problems or issues in the research protocol.

In the pilot study, I gathered the experiences of two middle school African American males. The pilot interview protocol served as a guideline to construct the main study's protocol. See Appendix D for a more detailed description of the instrument. Although a pilot study did not guarantee eliminating all problems, it can reduce the likelihood of making an error (Hassan, et al., 2006). For example, conducting a pilot study allowed me to observe if there were any additional problems which needed to be addressed, to test the efficacy of the research protocol, and as a result, it allowed me to observe if there were any confusing questions.

I developed the instrument culturally specific for middle school males who had experienced having an educator of a different race. Any modifications occurred after an expert panel reviewed the content of the questions for the intended interviews. After developing the questions and before submitting my interview questions to the IRB for

approval, I contacted an expert panel of individuals familiar with the topic to evaluate the interview questions. Included in the selection were Walden professionals who evaluated the quality of the questions. Having three experts in the field of African American males in education examine the completeness of the questions was a way to be sure that the test has content validity for the study and the research participants. In addition to the expert panel, who determined content validity, a pilot testing the interview questions provided information about the instrument deficiencies and suggestions for improvement or omission (Gay et al., 2009).

Pilot Study

When the evaluation of the questions was completed, and the expert panel evaluated the questions with a critical eye, then they emailed me their findings or suggestions. After that, I submitted the interview questions for approval to the IRB. When approval was granted to conduct a pilot study, I began the process of recruiting two male African American middle school students for the pilot program. Gay et al. (2009) reiterated the importance of interview questions being tested by research participants who were similar to the respondents in the sample for the study. Therefore, after the interview questions were asked, I checked if the respondents felt that certain questions had not been asked or were not relevant. No changes were made to the protocol.

Participants were selected or sought after based on preselected criteria based on my research question, which is the lived academic experiences of middle school African American males when taught by teachers of a different race. For recruitment purposes, I used multimedia sources, local papers, African American churches, snowballing to solicit

participants, and online recruitment. To achieve a homogenous sampling, I selected

students based on similar characteristics such as age range (middle school), gender (male)

and ethnicity (African American). As mentioned, the sample size for the pilot was two

middle school students. The data were collected during a semi-formal interview process

for recording information. General open-ended questions were asked, and their answers

were recorded.

The Site Location

Due to the current coronavirus quarantines and social limitations, video chat apps

and services such as Zoom, and Skype were added to site locations. I collected the data

by conducting interviews via video conferencing.

Purpose of the Pilot Study

The study's goal was to provide information that contributed to the success of the

research project and potentially add to bringing about social change in education and

cultural competency. The pilot study aimed to sort out all practicalities related to the

study. Specifically, for the pilot, as mentioned above, I chose two middle school African

American male participants to participate in the pilot program only. The two middle

school students were interviewed to identify possible flaws related to items on the

interview protocol. As a result of the pilot, I was able to indicate areas where research

protocol might not be followed. Accordingly, it also indicated where proposed methods

or instruments were too complicated or inappropriate for the study (Welman & Kruger,

1999). Lastly, I observed the nonverbal behavior of participants in the pilot study. I

gained important information about embarrassment or discomfort experienced concerning

the content or wording of items asked during the interviews. As a result, the trial run in preparation for the full-scale study was essential and contributed to the overall success of the study.

Main Study

After the pilot study, I began my main study. The study consisted of interviews with five African American middle school males about their educational experiences. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic I was not able to conduct face-to-face interviews. Therefore, I first emailed the parents of my participant's parental consent forms with the option to respond with, "I consent." Also, I utilized online conferencing options (Facetime, Zoom, and Skype). Before beginning the interviews, I checked my taping device, and then I checked the taping device via Zoom; after that, I began the interviews according to an interview protocol (see Appendix C). I interviewed the participants separately. I conducted semi-structured open-ended interviews with each student. The interviews lasted approximately a half to one hour each. I captured the students' experiences by recording anecdotes that illustrated their experiences. I used prompting techniques to gather clarification of each participant's statements. My goal was to bring the participants' experiences to life by uncovering their life world. This allowed me to capture critical elements of the discourse as I fully explored the participants' ideas and thoughts. After the first interviews, participants were informed that there might be a need for a second shorter interview to help clarify or ask any additional questions. The participants were contacted for follow-up if additional clarification was needed. After that, the interviews were transcribed.

Data Analysis Plan

Before Temi transcription was completed, I listened to each tape to capture the pauses and changes in vocal intonation and make a note of emotional characteristics and vocabulary use. I kept a record of thoughts after hearing the interview. I also kept a memo, personal notes from each interview and reflections. This process helped me become increasingly familiar with the transcript. When the transcript was returned from the transcriptionist, I numbered each transcript before analyzing it. I also, highlighted any part of the script that related to the research question to familiarize myself with the data. Then I generated codes. I organized the codes using color-coded index cards.

Next, I located related themes to pinpoint patterns. After that, I named my themes. The themes assisted me with data analysis. I created a more concise version of my themes. I started this process by creating a table (see Appendix E) that contained the meaning of the themes. I generated them by looking for common patterns or the frequency and how relevant the codes were to my research question. Thus, my data analysis process consisted of themes generated from what the participants told me in their interview response to their experiences through common patterns. Also, I documented the participants separately and examined their responses. I considered whether there were specific characteristics that made them different from other participants. I did not conduct member checks because the participants were children.

Issues of Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in the study I chose the influential trustworthiness criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985). The following trustworthiness criteria and

techniques used, clarifying research bias, thick descriptions, and reflective journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I stated that I am an African American who has worked in the public-school system for over 10 years and has experienced first-hand student racial, gender, and socioeconomic biases. This was addressed by having my results reviewed. To ensure what the participants were saying is what they meant to record, I summarized what the participants said by restating their replies. As mentioned prior, since the participants were children, I *did not* perform member checks. In addition, summarizing was also a way for me to follow up on what was originally said. This allowed the participant to elaborate on my analysis (Bloor, 2001).

My concern, common to those who do research was to ensure that my findings would be faithful as possible to the reflections of my participants' experiences. I tried my best to gather repeated experiences from participants interview responses. I used the rationale to ensure that my instrument and procedures were sufficiently robust and based on a pilot study. For a more detailed description of the instrument, details can be seen in Appendix D.

I also clarified my research bias to help ensure quality. My bias did not mean that I would purposely ignore the results in case the study goes against my beliefs or expectations, but instead, I maintained an open-minded attitude throughout the study. I included clarifying research bias as a measurement of quality to allow others to critique my work. I interviewed the participants and collected their reflections. The readers of the research should have sufficient information about the subjects under study and what they said. Also, I addressed issues of quality by using multiple strategies. For example, by

utilizing confirmability, the findings in the study should represent the data, versus my

personal beliefs (Gasson, 2004). I also used a reflexive reflective journal to minimize any

bias and to achieve reflexivity (Gasson, 2004).

Ethical Procedures

According to Bogdan and Bilken (1992) there is not an agreed-upon code of

ethics to follow for all qualitative studies. However, they suggested that the qualitative

researcher should maintain confidentiality, treat the participants with respect, avoid

deceit, and be clear in negotiating access and truthful in reporting results. I kept these

guidelines in mind as I collected, analyzed, and reported the data without violating the

confidentiality of the participants.

To ensure an ethical study, I took the following steps. Before selecting the

participants, each participant was informed that their participation in the study was

voluntary and that they could quit at any time (Israel & Hay, 2006). The duration,

methods, procedures, and the purpose of the study was explained prior to the participants

signing the consent forms. I advised the participants that their privacy was to be

maintained by ensuring that only my Chair and Committee Member would have access to

the data collected. The participants' parents were asked to fill out an informed consent

form, and the participants in the study were asked to fill out an assent form. The

participants' identities were kept confidential, as were agreements to gain access to

participants and data. Each participant was assigned a number for data transcription and

analysis. A pseudonym was assigned prior to analyzing the study. The data will be kept

in a locked cabinet and the documents protected by a password for 5 years, then they will be destroyed.

Summary

In this chapter, I created an argument for why my study was qualitative and the rationale for that choice. Furthermore, I described the study's research design components to give me sufficient information that others could replicate the research. Included was the initial correspondence with African American church secretaries to begin the process of recruitment. A detailed account of how the research was conducted was documented for the research study. The sections that followed discuss the participants' recruitment, the importance of the pilot study, data collection, the interviewing processes, and interpreting the transcript. Followed by issues of trustworthiness and ethical issues. In the next chapter, I provided a description of the participants, their views about their educational experience while taught by teachers of a different race. Also, I introduce the results of the research study. In Chapter 4 I discuss the results of the study.

Chapter 4

Introduction

This qualitative study aimed to explore the opinions and experiences of African American middle school males whom teachers of a different race taught. The problem addressed in the study was that African American males aged 12-14 tend to fall behind at disproportionate rates compared to their peers in academic achievement. This lack in academic achievement tends to create a gap in educational equality. RQ1 guided the research: What is the lived academic experience of middle school African American males when taught by teachers of different races? This basic qualitative study included seven African American middle school male students. Data were collected through individual open-ended semi-structured interview questions. The interviews were conducted via the Zoom software platform. The qualitative analysis was conducted through coding and thematic analysis.

Chapter 4 includes a description of the pilot study, the setting, and the participants. Then a description of the demographics and characteristics are given. Also, the chapter includes a summary of the data collection, the analysis of research findings and the evidence of trustworthiness in the research data. The chapter ends with an overview of the chapter and preview of Chapter 5.

Pilot Study

I conducted the pilot study with two African American middle school males from two middle schools in Southeastern United States. Both students met the age requirements for the study. Due to COVID 19 pandemic, both students were considered

remote learners, as both students were 100% online learners. Ray (2020) defines remote learners as learners who are not in the same physical environment. Learning is through forms of technology, such as video conferencing and virtual assessments. Participants in the pilot also used Zoom for their learning platform.

Both pilot participants met the study's requirement of being age 12-14 and were both enrolled in middle school in Southeastern United States. I emailed the two pilot participants a consent form and an assent form to be signed and received prior to the pilot study. After receiving the forms, I conducted the pilot study with two African American middle school males from two middle schools in Southeastern, United States (see Appendix A & B). Both parents gave their consent. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, both interviews were conducted via Zoom conferencing. The participants were asked 10-15 standardized open-ended questions that were designed for my main study. When the interviews were over, I asked the participants to provide feedback about any questions that were not clear. After both pilot interviews, I determined that the 10-15 questions were appropriate for the main study. I proceeded to transcribe the two pilot interviews. Upon completion, my dissertation chair and I agreed that I could begin recruitment and interview for the main study.

Setting

I conducted seven interviews via Zoom conferencing due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. All parents indicated that they felt a sense of security because their children were in a secure location in the home instead of a public location.

Demographics

Table 1 includes the demographics recorded during the interviews. The participants are listed in the number order in which they were interviewed. Due to the research subject matter, all participants were African American males. All seven participants were in middle school. The participants met the age criteria, ranging from age 12-15 and are 7th and 8th graders. All participants attended middle school in the Southeastern United States. They were either 100% virtual, in an online environment or in school at least one day a week.

Table 1

Participant Demographics (all participants were African American and all teachers were of European American ethnicity)

Participant #	Age	Gender Identity	Grade	School/Virtual	Teachers' Gender
Participant 1	14	Male	8th	Virtual 100%	2 females only
Participant 2	13	Male	8th	Virtual 100%	2 females 1 male
Participant 3	12	Male	7th	Virtual 100%	2 females 3 males
Participant 4	12	Male	7th	In School	2 females 2 males
Participant 5	14	Male	8th	Virtual 100%	2 females 3 males
Participant 6	14	Male	8th	First semester- Virtual Second semester- School	2 females 1 male
Participant 7	14	Male	8th	First semester- In school (one day). Second semester- In school (two days a week Thursday and Friday).	1 female 3 males

Data Collection

The study began after receiving Walden University IRB approval (number 11-30-20-0279034) in November 2020. I completed the data collection process on January 23, 2021. All participants were screen for the study to make sure they fit the criteria. The criteria for the study included interviewing participants who were 7th and 8th graders between the age of 12-14. Seven students were interviewed.

Participants' parents communicated with me by email, phone, and Zoom to provide consent and schedule times convenient for their children. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, I conducted all interviews on Zoom while they were in a private location in their home. Six participants felt comfortable with their Zoom camera on, while one student asked to have his camera off after my introduction. When I completed the last question, he put his camera on again, and I thanked him for his participation.

Prior to the interviews, to ensure the students felt comfortable, I introduced myself and shared the purpose of the study. Then I asked students to tell me what they like to do. Most answers included playing sports. I emphasized that everything that was discussed would be confidential unless I felt it would harm them or someone else. In addition, I mentioned that their name would not be disclosed. They would be assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality or for example, they would be known as participant number___. I shared that the data would be kept in a safe place that would be locked in a file. After reassurance, they were ready to begin. I thanked them again for being willing to participate in my research study, asked if they had any questions, shared that I would press record on two devices, I told them I would ask them what their name, age, grade,

and the name of their school. I also added that even though Zoom would be recording the interview, I would also have a notepad to jot down if needed. Then I asked the first of 10-15 interview questions. After I asked a question, I used notes and follow-up questions to respond to the participants' answer. Based on the participant's experiences during the interviews, the estimated times were approximately a half to one hour each.

After the interviews were conducted, I used the Zoom platform to save the interview. Then I transcribed the recording. After the first interview, I typed each document. After that I printed each. The hard copy printed served to begin the coding process visually. As mentioned prior, all documentation will be kept in a locked file. I have saved my electronic files on a USB drive. The documents include emails, recordings from Zoom, my android, and transcriptions. I am the only person who has access to the key.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was a continual process. After each interview, I organized the data around the results of each question. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, interviews were conducted via Zoom. After the interviews ended, I reiterated important notes that were relevant to that participant, I reviewed the Zoom interviews several times then I transcribed the interview. As the data patterns emerged, I developed a matrix. The interview questions were organized into categories (see a listing of categories and codes in Appendix E). Answers to interview questions that were off topic were noted and placed aside for further consideration. Then I used a color-coded system to help with the coding process. Each participant represented a specific color sticky pad. On the

presentation board I placed the information under the data section. I placed the colored

sticky pads on a presentation board to organize the key points. A colored circle dot was

placed on the group of sticky notes to represent the question. As the categories emerged, I

began to recognize themes. After the themes were identified, I created a table to organize

the themes. The table below identifies themes which emerged from the interviews. The

categories and codes followed by the themes are listed in appendix E.

Table 2

Emergent Themes

	Themes
Theme 1	Nice and caring teachers
Theme 2	Not getting help
Theme 3	No challenge in the virtual platform
Theme 4	Having a desire to succeed
Theme 5	Classroom interactions with the teacher made class fun
Theme 6	Learn through visual aids
Theme 7	Not attending Zoom (gave up) no help
Theme 8	Boring classes
Theme 9	Juggling classes (Too much work)
Theme 10	The need for more freedom on virtual platform using quotations as needed to emphasize their importance.

Discrepant Cases

Participants number two and three exhibited qualities of discrepant cases. The

analysis of the two participants' interview data described more unfair educational

experiences with their teachers in comparison to their peers. Participant number two added "I feels that I am being unfairly called out by my teacher."

> Immediately, she finds anything to agitate me so that she has a reason to get me out of class (remote environment). She did this last year too when I was in seventh grade (in person classes). She fusses and nags at me like my little brother does. As soon as I enter Zoom she looks at me and finds any opportunity to pick on me so she can kick me out of class, but she is only doing this to me. She does not do this to the European American boys.

Participant three shares his lived educational experiences consisted of witnessing European male students receiving lesser punishments for the same infractions as African American boys. He says, "I have even intentionally asked to go to the bathroom after European Americans students ask to go. Their answer is always yes. When I ask one minute later my answer is always no!"

Participant number two was a very serious participant. He wanted to understand the questions so he could answer properly. He is in a 100% remote learning environment. He had two European American teachers. He disclosed that he felt that one of his teachers targeted him. He experienced difficulty during Zoom classes. He reported he was often asked to leave the class, for example he stated, "I just got on Zoom, and I'm asked to leave." In addition, last year, during in person classes he was treated the same with his current teacher. He said, "She fusses and nags at me like my little brother does. She uses opportunities to aggravate me so that I will get mad and leave the class or is

kicked out of class." In addition, the participant felt it was disrespectful if he asked why things were happening. He also added, "my grades are different. I used to get As and Bs, but now I get Cs and Ds. He admitted his grades have plummeted since online remote classes. Lastly, he felt that the work was too much, and he was not receiving the support needed from his teachers. He added, "I feel comfortable asking African American teachers for additional help, because they don't fuss. My teacher looked at me and she seems to be turned off."

Participant number two did not fit into the traditional preppy look, and his hair was not cut short. His hair was braided. When there was a problem in class (Zoom) he felt angry and questioned what he did wrong. He felt there was a double standard when European American peers were involved. He felt pre-judged by his teachers. He declared, "She thinks I am bad, but I'm not!" Literature solidified that when cool pose is evident in the way boys walk, talk, and flashy clothes they can be misread by principals and teachers which may be the case for this boy.

It appears that participant number three's experience has affected his positive educational experiences with his teachers. He does not like school, but he liked it only when the teacher interaction and connects with the students. He currently had all European American teachers. Three of his teachers were male, two were female He added that one was a gay male. It appeared that this bothered him. He said he felt safe because he was not in class currently, but when it changed and classes went to 'A' days only, he had predetermined that he would not do well in the class.

Participant 3 diverted the conversation and talked about a 5th grade experience when he was treated unfairly, but his peer got a lesser punishment for the same infraction. "I watch my teachers praise the white students, but never praise us. My teacher shows more faith in them, you may want to give up when you see that the teacher has more faith in them (European students)."

> The teacher focus on them and says, yes, that's right get it! That can make you feel like they don't care, and you might give up. Black kids end up playing basketball, football and go to blockbusters. Blockbusters meaning selling drugs. That's not good, but that's where we end up at. The system is made up that we end up there. It doesn't let us go far… School is pressure. It is too much work right now. I am overwhelmed with too much work and no help!

He reported many experiences that are factors that affected his educational experience when racial mismatch existed.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The qualitative criteria used to determine trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This section presents the steps taken to show the evidence of the study's trustworthiness (Sandelowski, 1986). The study measured what is intended by interviewing until saturation, which revealed the truth of their educational experiences when taught by a teacher of a different race. The African American middle school males who shared the same experience are recognized as having credibility. The details provided in the methodology will allow transferability. The study is based on the participants' responses. There is the

acknowledgment of limitations in the study that might affect the outcome; this ensures confirmability. Lastly, the study's dependability can be replicated with similar methods (semi-structured interviews) with middle school African American males, age 12-14.

Results

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the participants in the study experienced schooling both in a virtual setting (online only) or in-class. Students who attended -class schooling attended on an A/B schedule, on Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/ Friday. All Wednesdays were held as days to do a deep cleaning of the school. In addition, teachers on both platforms assign work for students to do on the Canvas platform on Wednesdays.

During the interview process, the following research questions addressed the overall intent of the study. After the interviews were conducted, common patterns were identified.

Interview Q1. Tell me about your teachers this year?

Schooling. Under the category of schooling, for *Q1*. Three themes emerged: 1) Teachers being nice and caring, 2) not getting help, 3) no challenge in virtual learning environments.

The seven participants identified varied responses. Even though two boys shared the experience of having a nice and caring teacher, two participants had a different experience. They suggest, "Teachers were nice over the screen (Zoom platform) because they had to be, but teachers did not try to help when it was needed (Participant 2)" Also, in response to Interview Q1, participant number 5, a 7th grader answered the question by giving a numerical answer. He said, "I have five teachers this year." Participant number

6, an 8th grader, was excited because during his first semester of school he commented, "I had virtual only classes, but now I have teachers! I am in class." My last participant 7, an 8th grader, added an interesting reaction by saying, "I am able to complete my work fast. There is not a challenge being in a virtual environment."

Interview Q2. What are their names?

Due to the anonymity of the participants and their teachers and the information related to the participants, the names used in the research study, contain a numerical number. A gender listing of the teachers and the numerical order of the participants is located in Table 1.

Interview Q3. What are the differences that you see in your teachers?

The overarching answers of two of the participants were experiencing having a teacher who has a funny personality. All other responses differ. For example, my first interview participant (1) says, "There's not too much of a difference. Their teaching styles are kind of similar. I can't see much of a difference**."** Even though participant number 2's educational experience was virtual he states.

> Like some are nice and some are mean. It's a mix of both. Only teacher that tries to help you. She's (Math teacher) the only teacher that does that. Extra credit or asks do you need help with something. My other teacher there was no tolerance given (Exploratory) if you leave one minute before the time you are counted as absent.

Participant number 3's experience was having teachers who were funny. This added to his educational experience because even when he was tired he was able to push

through. He said, "You can be tired in all your classes, but when you get to his class you will be lit!" He even noted that he remembered everything that was taught. One difference noted is that his teacher implemented two game-based learning platforms named Kahoot and Gimkit. The participant suggested that both were interactive and engaging. Another difference participant 3 noticed in his teachers was the demeanor of another teacher. He associated the teacher's behavior and speech as being *girly.* When asked what that means, he proceeds to spells out the word… G-A-Y!

> I don't really like him that much because he's kind of weak. He was like one day we came to class and a girl student who usually doesn't come to class showed up, and he was like…Hey GIRL, where you been?" It bothers me, but then it doesn't bother me…the difference bothers him. Yeah, I feels uncomfortable, but I feel safe because I am not in the classroom, but online. If I was in class, I would fail because I wouldn't do anything in his class.

The last difference that participant 3 noticed, is that when his teacher is laid back or boring he (participant) tends to contribute to him falling asleep that is laid back, and boring contributes to him going to sleep in class.

Participant number 4 added, the differences in his teachers include his male teacher (Science) as being funny, while his female teacher (ELA) smiles, is personable when she asks the students how their day was. The participant (number 4) felt that this simple act of kindness contributes to him having a better day. Lastly, a primary difference he observes in his teachers is the ability to build a student/teacher relationship. He feels that this has helped to shape his overall academic success. She is his favorite teacher,

because she has built taken the time to build a relationship first. the participant mentioned that another of his teacher's (Math) presents the lessons too fast.

Participant number 5 discussed the differences of each teacher. He comments about his math teacher, "She doesn't talk to the class as much. For math she just focus' on the math book, and she puts it on the projector. Not a lot of interaction." Whereas his science and social studies teachers are funny and interact. He states,

> He's actually pretty funny most of the time. He makes jokes and he is not a boring teacher. My social studies teacher is a normal teacher, interacts with us. He lets us get a lot of work done. He does the things normal teachers do.

In contrast, he comments, "ELA is, pretty much like a normal teacher. We just sit there and finish work. Somedays we don't interact we just do work!" Lastly, participant number 5 shares, "Health, she is my favorite teacher. I had her last year. I think she is my favorite because I know her. I built a relationship with her." An opposite expression occurred when participant 5 mentions his Art teacher. He expresses a displeased expression and says, "There's just nothing to say!"

Second semester the participant (5) shares there is no differences they all teach the same. Then he adds, "My ELA/ Social Studies teacher, her teaching style is OK, we just read along and do the questions. We do the work together. Then we have an assignment based of what we just did."

Participant number 6, paused to articulate his response to tell me about the differences of his teachers. Then he said, "Nothing really. I have to tell one of my male teachers to

slow down sometimes, because he states, I be forgetting stuff." As he proceeds cautiously to describe the differences he thinks of one of his teachers the expression on his face says it all…there are no words to describe this teacher. His expression was that of displeasure. When asked about other teachers he says his experience is they all teach the same. Their teaching style consist of reading the materials together, and as a class they answer the questions. All work is done together. The participant adds that additional assignments are based on what they did together.

Participant number seven briefly discussed the differences of each teacher. He disclosed "It seems as if he knows more than the other teachers. "I can tell by the way he talks." He describes him as "being chilled." While his other male teacher is more chilled than he is. His only female teacher is described as quiet.

Interview Q4. What do you like about your teachers?

Diverse responses emerging from the interview *Q4.* Varying themes gathered include teachers who are funny, laid back, weird, and energetic.

Participant number one has two female teachers. He likes one female teacher (Math/Science) who is easy to talk to. "We know that we can talk to her anytime about anything." My other female teacher (ELA/ Social Studies) is funny. Really funny,"

Participant number 2 revealed, "I like the way they try to help advance your grades by giving a 100 score to help get your grades up." Another example given for what the participant liked about his teacher was her personality. He notes,

She is kind, and she does not fuss at you… she allows students to eat while

Zooming her class, but she does not tolerate disrespect." If disrespect occurs

he has witnessed her anger. And last, "I like she does not give a lot of work."

Interview Q5. What do you not like about your middle school teachers?

The commonalities of *interview Q5.* include participants feeling that the online platform

can become difficult to navigate, increased work, difficulty adjusting to the learning style

of the teacher, the experiencing of trying hard and not having any difficulty.

Four participant had similarities in their responses. They included concerns about

the difficulty of the workload expected due to online learning, too much work! Teachers

being mean by calling them out in an embarrassing way, lack of interaction in class. On

the contrary, two participants did not experience any difficulty in middle school.

Participant number 1 relayed, "I like both teachers, but there's not a sense of

freedom.!" Participant 2 added, "I don't like being accused of something I did not do!"

Whereas participant 3 discussed his learning preference. "It's just boring…not fun! I

wished my teachers were fun. They are boring. I wish it could be fun! I wish classes

could be lit!" The expression "Lit" was introduced. Participant 3 explained, "lit can be

defined as being very energetic."

Participant 4 explained why teachers post a lot of work. He commented,

When the COVID 19 Pandemic hit, it only got worse. They gave us a lot of work

because they didn't know what to do. Then that is when people started dropping

out! Parents couldn't pay bills, no electricity, and kids felt bad, so they dropped

out. It's so much work that I choose to do my work some days to catch up and not

Zoom, but there is a penalty when I am not in class (absent).

Concerning classwork, participant number 5's expressed concern about his

teacher's teaching style. He said,

She doesn't interact. When she does the work she just confuses me. The way she

does it doesn't make sense. Most of the time! The way she shows us doesn't make

sense…let's say it makes sense, but it confuses me.

Note that the participant has not told her she is explaining work in a confusing way. He

said,

I just do it my way instead, and I get it right." I also don't like the way my teacher

calls people out and embarrasses us. She can be mean and funny at the same time,

but I don't take it personally.

The two participants who had a different account of their middle school teachers

said,

During first semester my science and math teacher, we were on good terms and

my art teacher, I just like her work. I just did it, whatever she asked me to do. I

like school. Now, second semester when it started in ELA and Social studies, I

didn't get it. But I started clicking on the reading assignment and reading it with

her, now I am getting it. It was difficult at first, but now I have a better

understanding, with her too... I don't think there's anything I don't like.

Interview Q6. What do you like about your middle school classes?

The participants have varied answers. Individualized answers range from the classes are easy, no interactions, hanging out in class, not a lot of work, questions being answered, teachers know the subject. Only one participant answered, "I do not like middles school classes."

Participant 1 reported, "They are really easy. I actually pay attention. Some people are not, 'cause they don't pay attention to the lesson. If they do they get it!" Participant number 3 went even further to express "I like when I experience interjections with my teacher." With further disclosure of his feelings, it appears that he means interaction with his teacher. He says, "I like how she interactions with us." In his reflections, he added, "I have to like them because I have to go to school, but I don't like my classes." Participant 4 and 5 detailed two points. First, they like being with their friends. Participant 4 explains, "I like school because I can be with my friends. I like my friends. They are hyped (Excited)." While participant 5 smiled and spoke:

> One class, not a lot of work, and it's my favorite class…math! I like my health class too because it is not as much work. But my ELA class I don't like it, I hate reading, but somehow I do good in it.

The last two participants' experiences coincided, they encountered teachers who knew the subject well. He said, "They are tuff. In some stages, depending on what we are talking about the teacher knows that subject." While participant number 6 anticipated asking the teacher a question when he was confused, he said, "The teacher answers my questions before I can ask."

Interview Q7. What would you like to change about Ms./Mr._____ classes?

There were no related answers in the participants' responses to what they would change about their classes. Instead, participant answers vary from having more freedom, how the teacher views them, boring classes and as mentioned in prior answers, trying to find a way to juggle classwork.

Participant number 1 described his lived experiences as having a need for more freedom. He reiterated by saying, "Right, there's not really a sense of freedom in the classroom. like everything was what she says, how she says to do it, when to do it." On the other hand, participant number 2's lived experience was different. He introduced a contrasting point of view. He said,

> I would like to change the way she views me. I feel I am being singled out when I enter the class. I want to change this! If I say anything, she says I am being disrespectful. I can't give my point of view. If I do and she doesn't like it I am asked to leave the class.

Participants have shared that especially since the COVID 19 Pandemic, classes have been boring. Participant number 3 explained the following by saying,

> Since we have had to go virtual the teachers haven't known what to do. They give us a lot of work because they haven't known exactly what to do. They try to get all the work done. We end up with tons of work and we can't finish it.

Participant 4 agreed with having more work. He stated, "For me juggling multiple assignments and classes has been difficult. I don't want to miss any assignments."

Interview Q8. What makes Ms./Mr._____ classroom a place to learn?

In reviewing the data, two themes were revealed in response to interview *Q8*. Several participants (four) indicated that their classroom was empowering and allowed them to learn due to the aid of visuals and three participants agreed that having classroom interaction with their teacher helps to make learning fun.

Participant 1 asserted that "We understand what she is saying in Math/Science." In ELA/Social Studies "She doesn't go too fast. She asks if she is going too fast or slow." When participant number 2 was asked if his exploratory teacher's class was a place to learn, there was no response, but his facial expression says it all. For the record I asked him to explain his response. He said, "there are no words." It should be noted that he begins to shake his head in a negative way and said, "it is not a place to learn. It is really not a place to learn." Then added, "my science teacher's classroom is a place to learn because she uses slides."

Also, participant 4 shared, "There's a lot of things on the wall (Visuals). When on Zoom I can see it." Participant number 3 shared that he too has experienced one classroom that is not a place to learn. He explained, "I have to move in order to learn. Math class has no physical movement." Therefore, he cannot learn. He suggested that his English class was OK. He said,

> It's a place to learn because it is laid back. He's energic when he needs to be. He not all on you. … Like a count down. like ok, you've got 10, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 minute…turn it in! Get it like maybe two days later. Not a lot of pressure. You can have fun and learn. If you just teach something and don't put any efforts into it. You can't learn. Put together fun plus learning."

Participant number 5 remembered a time when his science teacher put a lot of effort into an activity. He revealed, "I remember one time he clipped PVC pipes and told us wherever you put the marbles they will always end up together. That was fun. I am a visual learner, so I remember that."

The participants need for interacting persisted. The more the teacher interacted with the students the more the students voice that the class was fun. For example, participant number 6 experienced the interaction of his teachers. Participant 6 acknowledged,

> She walks over and helps you if you are having problems. 1 likes the way she interacts. After nearly every sentence she asks do you understand what she's talking 'bout, so that we actually understand what she's saying. She doesn't go too fast. She asks if she is going fast or too slow.

Participant 7 added a noteworthy response, he says, "I never got a chance to go in his class (Math) I've Zoomed only. Visuals, probably. The posters on the wall. The messages on the posters."

Interview Q9. What do you think may cause an African American male student to give up and not want to learn in Ms./Mr. _____classroom?

Related answers included not putting in the work, treated unfairly, more faith in other students, family issues, lack of help, and giving up among the replies. Two participants (1, and 3) felt that an African American boy would give up because it was too much work involved. While two others (participant 2 and 3 again) felt giving up might occur due to experiencing unfair treatment from their teacher, family issues were

among the answers of two (participant 4 and 7) and one participant added the lack of motivation as a reason to give up (Participant 5).

The participants had strong opinions about this question and readily answered it. Five participants disclosed that the answer they gave was due to personal experience, while two students, both straight "A" students voiced their opinion by what they observed and witnessed personally. Participant number 1 a straight "A" student remarks, "Don't care or they don't want to put in the work." When asked why he felt they think it is too much work. He commented, "Sometimes it is, but not every time. Sometimes it actually is too much work." The participant disclosed that he has friends who are giving up. I ask if he ever wonders why. He says, "I really know kind of half and half. I just let them do them!"

Participants number 2 and 3 shared lived experiences that they felt involved racial discrimination; therefore both give reasons that involved being treated unfairly. For example, participant number 2 said, "Boys will want to give up when teacher's treat us (African Americans) different than other people." I asked the participant to explain *other people*. He goes on to say, "When I am treated differently than the other race, Caucasians (European Americans). "Yeah, they will just quit!" Along the same line, participant number 3 added, "A boy would give up when teachers have more faith in White (European American) kids." He also added, "The pressures we have. Teacher's giving work after work, after work…overwhelming!" Participant 6 agreed that the work is hard. He says, "You don't have help. You are scared to ask teachers."

Participant 4, 5 and 7 contributed students quitting due to family issues that have occurred during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Specifically, participant 5 mentioned, "There's no money to pay for Wi-Fi." "Parents can't pay bills; my friends worry about eating. They can't handle it, so they have dropped out to help with money." Other issues include no one being in the household to help with Zoom. Participant 5 continued, "While on Zoom they do the work, but after Zoom they will not do it. African American boys like to have fun. They don't like to sit in class."

Interview Q10. What contributed to your overall success or failure in Ms./Mr._____ classroom?

The common themes for interview *Q10* overall success or failure were having a desire to succeed, did not go to class (Zoom) and giving up. Participant number 1, a straight "A" student reports having a strong desire to succeed. He stated, "Just wanting to succeed." Also, participants 4 and 5 added that the time devoted to the class, being able to do the work and interacting in the class are causes for success. Whereas participant number 2 felt his overall failure in his Exploratory class contributed to profiling. He said,

When I walk in her class (Joins class via Zoom) I haven't done anything, and she wants to fuss at me. It makes me want to quit; it makes me not want to do any work. She's just nagging at me the entire class. It makes me mad! I just want to sit there and not do anything! He continues, It was like that last year in 7th grade and she did that when I walked (Walked in physically) in class." I asked the student if he ever asks her why she does that? His response, I don't ask why because doing that I feel like that would be disrespectful.

Additionally, two participants (Numbers 3 and 6) contributed their overall failure to go to class (Zoom). Participant number 6, commented,

> I gave up on myself. Stop showing up for Zoom, not paying attention in class (Last semester). I won't lie, I would just join Zoom. That's all. I knew the work. But now I am serious. I am trying my best!

Academics Success / Failure

Under the category of Academic success, the participants are asked questions specifically directed toward their success or failure academically.

Q1. What type of grades do you get?

Two participants' grades were extremely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants' grades were below average. Two participants received average grades, while only two participants, number 1 and 7, were recipients of Principals' List, they are Straight "A's students. Participant 1 and 7 shared findings by simply responding, "I'm on the Principals list, I get straight "A's." In contrast, participant 2, shared a significant contribution, by saying,

> Before online learning I would get A's and B's and maybe one C. After remote-my grades went down. It's not the same. I feel it's not as much communication. When you are in school it's one on one, but online it is hard to communicate. Communicating through a screen is harder, I guess! Wednesday is supposed to be a catch-up day, but they give us work! My grades with remote are now D's and C's. Way easier in school. Tech issues not really a problem. Communication is

the problem. I am not getting as much help as I did in school… I get bad grades. C's and D's.

Participant 4 shared a similar experience with grades. He added,

I like science my grade should be a B. I don't have a lot of time to put into studying the math, because I have other classes, so I don't do well. I might get a C or D. There is a lot of reading, but I like reading. My mom helps me a lot. She boosts me up! I should get a B.

Participant 5 and 6 felt their grades were on target. Participant 5 commented, "I have B for Math, B in Science, C+ in my Social Studies class, a B in English, and an A for Exploratory-(Health)." While participant 6, explained, "I get grades that are 70 and up. My math teacher contributes to my success. She is willing to get on another Zoom to help me and other students out.

Interview Q2. Why do you think you get good grades or why do you think you are failing?

The participants were asked why they thought they received good grade or why they received failing grades. There were two primary answers given by the participants, they felt a desire to get good grades, and they did not feel they were putting in the work necessary to get good grades. Four participants indirectly, added that the intensity of the work given added to them giving up.

Participants 1 and 7 are both straight "A" students. Participant number 1 confessed, "I get good grades because I want them. I have a desire to succeed!" Participant 7 who also received straight "A's" added a different response, "I can

understand the work they are giving us and teaching us at the same time." When asked if he ever experienced difficulty with his grades his response was, "It depended on the year. With this particular year I am nailing it!" In contrast, five participants felt they did not do enough on the Zoom platform to warrant good grades. For instance, participant 2 explained, "I get bad grades when I don't want to be there (On Zoom)." A similar response from participant 2 explained, "I know what to do to get my grades up. I have to get up and do what I need to do…even if it is boring on Zoom!" Again, participants experienced the educational impact of COVID-19 Pandemic. Also, participant 4 experienced the effect of education during COVID-19. He replied, "I am not putting the time into every class because it is so much work, but when I put my mind to it…" Only one participant cited, "When I pay attention and the teacher helps I get good grades." But the teacher did not help on Zoom.

Mismatched Teachers

Q1. what makes a good teacher? Complete this sentence…a good teacher is someone who….?

Research collected by Egalite et al. (2015) suggests the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project has demonstrated that demographic mismatch can contribute to racial achievement gaps. Whereas when students and teachers are matched racially students report being cared for, having ease in communication, and motivated to achieve. MET findings report that teachers assigned to students of the same race experience similar positive benefits in terms of academic perceptions (Egalite et al., 2015). Psychologically, when mismatch occurs students may experience the influence of

stereotype threat (Steele, 1997). Also, when teacher and student share the same race, the threat is lessened, and students may experience a supportive classroom environment (Dee, 2015).

Each participants answers were diverse for what makes a good teacher. For example, participants shared a good teachers' attributes and characteristics shared include a teacher who is, understanding, listens, fun, cares for all, interacts, respects equally and helps. Participants were able to complete the sentence without thinking. The completed sentences by the participants are as follows:

Participant number 1 said, "A good teacher is someone who takes the time to understands your point of view." Very similar comments were added by participant number 2 and 6 who stated, "A good teacher listens to you, respects you. Respects all students equally. Treats everybody the same without looking at race or a person's problems." Participant 3 and 5 acknowledged the need for a good teacher to be understanding. "A good teacher is someone who is also fun. The class has to be fun for me to learn (participant 3)." While participant 4 and 7 shared that a good teacher should help everyone; not just a particular group, he also expressed, "A good teacher is nice and cares about children (Participant 6)."

Interview Q2. What is it like being an African American male in class with a teacher of a different race?

When asked the core question about their feelings concerning what is it like being an African American male in class with a teacher of a different race, the first, fourth and sixth participants added "No difference!" Related comments were expressed from

participant number 5, when he expresses, "No problem." Also, participant number 7 acknowledges a short statement, "Not affecting anything!" In contrast participant number two and three shared different educational experiences. Participant number 2, chimed in by saying,

It's like I'm fussing with my little brother. It's like they (Teacher) do stuff. It's hard to explain. They do stuff that they know you hate! It's like they nag on you on purpose to get you mad most of the time! One time I went to a meeting with my mom, so first I was in class, and I asked if I could go outside, and she said no! I went to the meeting and then they're outside." The participant shares his experience with his other teacher and says, It's like any regular class. She's usually the same and treats everybody the same."

Though similar in intensity, participant number 3 explained his lived experience,

It doesn't bother me, because most teachers are white. Black kids end up playing basketball, football and go to blockbusters. After viewing my questioning look he continues, Blockbusters meaning selling drugs. That's not good, but that's where we end up at. The system is made up that we end up there. It doesn't let us go far. Joe Biden talked about that he said if a Black man did something back in the day, they got harder sentencing than a White (European American). Maybe one year for the Whites (European American) and a few years for the Blacks (African Americans). Being in a class with all white teachers is ok right now they're not racist. I have got used to it since kindergarten.

Q3. Give an example of when a teacher of a different race had a positive affect or negative affect in your schooling (grades)?

Five participants disclosed positive responses concerning the positive effect teachers had on their grades. Only one participant cited a negative response. Also, a participant did not contribute a response to the question.

Participant 1 and 2, answered in similar ways, "Not really any negative effects; teacher has helped me after a Zoom lesson was over." Even though participant 2, an eighth grader, speaks about getting help from his teacher, he spoke of help received in 7th grade only. He added, "She would help me. If I was behind she would always give me extra credit." The only negative effect in schooling acknowledged was by participant 3. He says, "No, I take responsibility. Only time I had a bad grade that was because of the teacher was I turned in my work late and the teacher didn't know I did." Before I could finish the question participant 4 responds immediately to the question by stating, "positive!" A positive affect to his schooling is given when participant 4 explained his experience,

> When we get in trouble they don't say mean stuff they just like say sit down stop doing that. Some teachers if you don't stop doing that they say I'm going to send you here, I'm going to send you to the office. There's like a lot of stuff going on right now. Like they're showing videos of cops picking up Black kids throwing them around and stuff. Like they're 12 they are like 30-34 years ole men. The reality today is there are police slamming kids around, and a lot going on in the world, with movements."

A different response was given by participant 5 as he mentioned a positive experience through an interactive lesson in science class.

> When my teacher had made the mini trampoline thing. Trampoline with the PVC pipe. The visual of force and gravity when he showed us that the marbles would always come together. Then he put a ball in there they all sunk down. No matter what." When asked about a negative experience with his grades he says, "Not really!"

Lastly, participant 7 interjected, "They would congratulate me." The positive experience happened when his English and Social Studies teachers responded to his grades positively.

Question After Response:

Interview Q3a. Why do you think having a teacher of a different race is a benefit for you?

The Reponses were varied concerning the benefits of having a teacher of a different race. One participant answered that it is a benefit, while other participants felt it was the same, they were used to it and did not really matter. Participant 1, remarked, "It's the same." While participant 5, adds the reality of his experience was, "I've gotten used to it!" Participant 4 shared his experience through his world view as he shared,

> I think it is a benefit kinda because I think some kids get offended. I know some students get offended when there are teachers of one race. It doesn't seem fair lot of one color, one nation, teachers not like another nation. Like Black and white, you don't have a lot of black teachers. Some kids might get offended by that. I think it is a benefit like some schools, I don't know what school it is. I remember

a while ago this school in some county wouldn't let a Black teacher teach there. I don't know what school it was.

Participant 5 responded, "It's not a struggle, I am used to it." While participant 7 expressed, "I don't think it's a benefit. To me. Race doesn't matter. No, it's not a struggle." Lastly, participant six could not think of a response to the question.

Interview Q4b. Why do you think having a teacher of a different race is a struggle for

   you?

There are two common responses, teacher fussing, and the need to have a teacher of the same race. There are only two participants who responded that in their experience having a teacher of a different race was a struggle. Participant 2 shares,

   It's a struggle for me, "The fussing is affecting my grades. I get mad and get out

   of her class (Zoom), then that is affecting my grades. My male teacher (Math) is

   not a struggle.

In much the same way participant 3 resounded, "It's a struggle, I'd rather have a Black (African American) teacher. I'd like to see what that is like. I haven't had any in middle school."

Interview Q5. Can you tell me something you wish your teacher knew about you that could help your schooling (grades)?

All responses, except one directly were characteristic of or related to cultural learning styles of African American males. The wish list consisted of 1) the boys being visual learners 2) having a need for movement 3) having a need for social interaction, 4) being distracted easy. Only one participant wanted the teacher to know how he grew up.

Participant 1 chimed in, "I am a visual learner. Wish lesson were more visual." In contrast, participant two wanted his teacher to have an understanding of who he is. "I wish she knew I was very charismatic, and it is hard for me to sit down. I have to fidget with something and stand up sometimes so they would know how to deal with it." Similarly, participant 4 added, "I get distracted." While participant 3 wished his teacher would apply more social interaction. He says, "More fun in the class, more interjection (Interaction) in the teaching. I like being out and about. I don't like to just sit there. Just fun activities."

Participant 6, spoke,

I forget things easy. Like how to solve a problem in math class. I am a slow reader. My art teacher she already knows me. I wish she knew I was creative. Well she says I am creative. She says I am special."

He pauses to show me a mask he made.

Participant 7's (Straight "A" student) response was distinct. He mentioned, "I wish they knew how I grew up." He did not elaborate further. Participant 5 was the only participant who answered with a reply of "*nothing*!"

Struggles in School

Interview Q1. What has been a major obstacle (problem) in school?

There were two overarching responses. The obstacle of online learning and no obstacles. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, five participants cited online learning or the Zoom format as a obstacle. Two participants noted that there were no obstacles. Participant 1 and 4 shared that they have not experienced having obstacles this school

year. Whereas participants 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 all shared related issues due to COVID-19 pandemic, online learning, the Zoom platform or technology issues.

Participant 2 beamed and mentioned, "It's me getting in trouble. It stops me from getting good grades if I am in, in- school suspension (ISS) when I was in school. I am not in the class. Now obstacles with Zoom-communication." Participant 3 shared his personal issue when he confessed, "Just school itself. Just school! I never liked school, but if it was funnier, I would like it." In contrast to not liking school, participant 5 puts the blame on himself and online learning. He said,

Sometimes I just didn't want to do my work. It's different when you're in school. When you're at home it is so many things that can distract you. Things you want to do or have to do. Participant 7 also has like experiences due to online learning and being at home due to the Pandemic.

Participant 6 shares his educational journey,

I kept giving up on myself. It's going to get hard…it's life! There was a turnaround…my mom gave me a speech! I have a brother who is under me, I have cousins, looking up to me. If I fail, people will be laughing at me for giving up. I had to succeed for my little brother and my cousin. That was the turn around.

Participant 1 and 4 shared the experience of not having any obstacles. They said, "I haven't encountered that, no obstacles."

Interview Q2. Tell me about a time when you thought you were treated unfair in school. How did you feel?

Four participants shared the feeling of being unfairly treated in school. Three participants did not experience any level of mistreatment. Participant 1, 4, and 7 responded by saying, "Never really." No, I do not feel unfairness in school." And "Not treated unfair at all. Teacher's pay attention to what needs to be taught. They are not focused on personal things. e.g., not sitting straight, or you have a hood on your head." Participant number 2 shared his experience,

Once a girl of a different race asked if she could go to the bathroom. The teacher said yes. Then I asked, because I had to go and she said NO. The class rule is if another boy is in the bathroom you can't go…no other boy was in the bathroom. She never let me go. With my White (European American) teachers I use to experiment. When someone said can I go to the bathroom, I would see what they would say. They would let them go, but when I asked most of the time they said…NO! I felt disappointed!

Also, participant 3 commented on his experience,

I am always treated unfair. In 3rd grade I had a teacher she tried to black ball me, telling teachers bad things about me. She wouldn't let teacher's see me for they're own. Teachers think I am bad now, but when they get to know me I am not who they think I am." Participant five adds, "Yes last year. I felt that I wasn't doing anything wrong, but I was blamed for it. I felt like I was targeted!

Participant 6 shared his experience,

I'm a person like um, if I do something I will be the one to get caught most of the time that's how I learn from my mistakes and I just don't do it again. I help

people to not make the kind of mistake I made. I helped last year when the

pandemic hit. All my friends played around. I had A's and B's; I would always do

the work when they played around. Stay positive…positive energy. I play sports,

just like sports I have to push my body, now I have to push my mind.

Participant 6 talked more about his own mistakes, instead of being treated unfair. Maybe

being caught all the time may make him feel like being treated unfair to him.

Interview Q3. What has been the best or worst thing that has happened with a teacher of

a different race?

There are varying experiences. Three participants had a best experience, while

two participants had a worst experience. One participant had no comment, and one

participant was neutral. Participant 1 shared the best experience, "My teachers got to

know me as a person." Participant 2 remarks,

I can't think about the best. Worst, being mistreated by teacher. Also 7th grade,

during orientation a male teacher, came over yelling and spitting, talk spit. I just

met him, and he was being rude for no reason. From then on he hated me. I didn't

do anything to him.

A similar remark came from participant number 3 as he said,

Worst! They (European American teacher) will blame you for something another

kid did. In contrast participant number 4 excitedly says, "Best! "If you get the

answer right they (European American teacher's) give us candy." Another best

experience is shared from participant 5 who said, They always give us a second

chance. when I joke I take it too far! I apologize, and she gives me another chance.

A neutral response was shared by participant number seven when he adds, "The best...I haven't really paid attention to it." Lastly, participant number 5 did not comment.

Interview Q4. In school what types of things make you happy?

There are a wide range of answers. The participants had individualized ideas. They ranged from treatment, recognition, candy, children, smiles, and learning. Participant number 1 and 7 focused on academics as they reported, "I am happy when I get something right." And "Learning!" In the same vein, participant 2 was happy when he was treated right. Being recognized for something great is what make participant 3 happy. Rewards for getting answers correct makes participant 4 happy because he gets candy. Participant 5 expressed, "Seeing the teacher enjoy being with the students is a happy moment for him." Likewise, just being there and seeing everybody. Saying good morning and seeing the smiles on their face was happiness for participant 6."

Interview Q5. In school, what types of things have made you angry?

Common answers revolved around unfair treatment, and the lack of academic understanding. Participants responded in the following ways. Participant 1 emphatically spoke saying, "I get angry when I think I'm right, but I'm not!" While participant 5 and 6 experienced getting wrong answers when they do not understand. Participant 7 exclaimed, "Missing school and being behind in my work, classes are what makes me mad." Whereas participant 2, 3 and 5 shared that unfair treatment makes them angry.

Participant 2, reported, "I get mad when I am treated unfair. Kicked out of class. Blamed for wrong things. Yelling at me for something I did not do." Likewise, participant 3 shared the experience of, "Being blamed! Being lied on, I get angry." Participant 5 got angry when the teacher was calling students out [Embarrassing students] being funny about it."

Interview Q6. asked what are some ways to improve your class/school?

Responses were diverse, as the participants were excited to provide input to help improve their school. Participants acknowledged they would have engagement, pair teachers with student personality, educating the teacher, advance intelligence, fewer classes, give students advice, and more data on iPads.

Participant 1 and 3 shared similar input. Whereas participant 1 added, "Make it more engaging for them." Participant 3 believed, "If I was the Principal, I would make class fun. More training on not just teaching, but on interjection (interaction) and funniest." Participant 5 gave feedback, "Less classes and less teachers would improve the school." Participant 2 expounds on real life experience by saying,

I feel they should do something like this, an interview so they would know what teacher to put you with… You explain yourself then they pair you with a teacher! They know who your good with.

Participant 4 promoted advancement by adding, "Real world books. Advance intellect." While participant 4 advanced intelligence, participant 6 leaned toward the human element in his response,

I would give them advice (students). They are in that I '*don't care*' mood! They

are not dumb! I have to do right to set the right example. I know people are giving

up (since the pandemic). They have to see me walk across that stage.

Lastly, participant 7 responded to a realistic issue as he mentioned,

So, I think they could give us more data on our iPad so we don't have to use our

personal belongings for school. I think that at home, that there can be a problem at

home with the internet, so if the internet isn't working, I can't use my iPad, I can

use my phone. I don't like using my phone for school.

Straight Talk…What I Want People to Know

Interview Q1. What advice would you give to teachers of a different race?

The participants answered in closely related answers which included responses

about student care, interaction, positive attitude, and race related. Although all answers

were related to the student, three participants gave advice specifically with focus about

the race of the student (African American males).

Participant 1 delved into teacher morale when he reflected, "Don't give up on

students." Participant 2 and 3 shared parallel experience with teacher advice. Participant

2 states, "I would tell them not to judge a book by its cover. Just because I look like I'm

going to hurt somebody, I'm just a nice guy." Participant 3,

Just because you see a lot of Black people doing bad things, doesn't mean I am

the same! Don't think that it is only Black people doing bad things! Because there

are other people. look at me like all Black people are doing bad things. Because

there are other people doing bad things. I feel like if I did something bad and I

was in school and if I was standing next to a White guy, and I had low academics,

well maybe if I was in the middle with grades, if both of us were out there, if he

said it was me, I would be blamed for doing something bad. They have high

expectations for him.

Participant 4, said, "Keep doing what you're doing. Keep caring about the

children." Participant 5 advised, "Interact with the students more!" Participant 6, believes

"Keep a positive outlook, because the boys need help." Participant 7, emphatically

speaks, "It's not about race. It's about how well you can teach."

Interview Q2. What advice would you give students who have teachers of a different

race?

The answers challenged students to overcome self-sabotaging and negative

thoughts by offering them positive affirmations, such as Don't quit, be you, start fresh,

and try your best! Participant 1 cautioned the teacher, "Don't give up on the student. Vice

versa, not to give up on the teacher, who are trying to do their job." Participant 2

observed,

Some teachers are going to be mean, but sometimes you have to roll with the

punches. because you can't do nothing about it. You have to roll with the punches

and keep on, 'cause you know its gonna get better.

Participants 3 and 4 reminded the students about their uniqueness when they

stated, "Be you!" Participant 5 added, "Try your best and if you want to do it…just do

it!" Unlike, the answers given prior, participant 5 observed, "Don't try to do anything that

will make them target you." Also, participant 6 took note of possible roadblocks for students when he promoted this advice,

> Forget about the day before, start fresh. If you get in trouble, forget about the day before, and start new the following day. If it is still bad it's because they remember your past, what you did. Now you have to change things to be trusted. Stay positive!"

In conclusion, participant 7 reflected, "Try your best! The harder you try the better you'll succeed!

Summary

The purpose of my research study was to examine the lived academic experience of middle school African American males when taught by teachers of different races. In Chapter 4, the organization of the chapter began with the pilot study to refine or troubleshoot any unforeseen issues prior to the research. The pilot study did not present any deficiencies that would impact the study. The next section was the setting section. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted via Zoom video communication platform. Participants were in an isolated area in their home. The participants' demographics were presented and the characteristics necessary to show that the participants represented the targeted group. The steps taken in the data collection were discussed, and relevant information concerning the recruitment procedures, interview process, gathering and analyzing process were discussed. Next the preparation involved for the data analysis in the research was explored. A framework to identify patterns and connection used in coding data and emergent patterns to create themes was

presented. Evidence of trustworthiness is presented in the chapter to shows that the research study showed credibility, dependability, and confirmability. Due to the age of the participants in the study transferability is not used. The results section provided the findings based on 12-15 open ended interview questions given to seven African American middle school males. The responses examined the academic experiences when taught by a teacher of a different race. Participants experiences were documented and coded. The following themes were formulated from significant interview questions.

There were no related answers in the participants responses to what they would change about their classes. Instead, participant answers vary from having more freedom, how the teacher views them, boring classes and trying to find a way to juggle classwork since the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Related answers concerning giving up included, feeling that an African American boy would give up because it was too much work, experiencing unfair treatment from their teacher, family issues and the lack of motivation.

For mismatched teachers, five of the participants share there was not a difference, no problem, not affecting anything. While two participants noted a negative difference in their experience of having a teacher of a different race.

All responses concerning struggles in school, except one directly were characteristic of or related to cultural learning styles of African American males. The wish list consists of the boys being visual learners, having a need for movement, having a need for social interaction, and being distracted easy. Only one participant wanted the teacher to know how he grew up.

When asked what advice they would give to teachers of a different race, the participants answered in closely related answers which include responses about student care, interaction, positive attitude, and race related answers.

Advice for other students challenged students to overcome self-sabotaging and negative thoughts by offering them positive affirmations, such as "don't quit, be you, start fresh, and try your best!"

In Chapter 5, I summarize the findings and tie the results of the study to the theoretical account of the two theories presented in Chapter 2 of my research study. The theoretical foundation associated with this study employed critical race theory (CRT) as the research method and oppositional cultural theory (OCT). Following are the study's limitations. I will then, relate the results to theory and finish with my recommendations for further studies followed by closing remarks.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendation

Introduction

In this basic qualitative study, I explored the lived educational experiences of seven African American middle school males taught by a teacher of a different race. The unique value of the study provided a viewpoint from the student's perspective. The lack of research from the student's perspective was explored in the literature review in Chapter 2. To obtain knowledge about the issue surrounding African American middle school male's achievement gap, a basic qualitative study was used to obtain insights into the participants' academic experiences. The recruitment process for acquiring participants in the study began with flyers posted on virtual bulletin boards throughout Southeastern, United States. Through the technique of snowballing the referrals to recruit possible participants was used. Participants needed for the study were between the ages of 12 and 14 years.

The duration of the interviews was approximately a half-hour to an hour. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic online data collection using Zoom was used. I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven participants on Zoom until saturation was reached. The participants shared their opinions concerning the lived educational experiences when taught by teachers of a different race. After each interview was completed, I transcribed the data. Constant comparisons then complemented an ongoing reading of the data so the codes and themes could be generated. Through the analysis process, the data were broken down into pieces to explain the findings for the research study. I did not use member checking because children were used in my study. Instead, I used rich thick descriptions

which are actual quotes from the participant. Then I summarized what was said to confirm the accuracy of their lived experience (Loh, 2013).

The study was conducted because there was a need to examine the inequalities that continue to exist in our public school system for middle school African American boys. There continues to be a disproportionate number of African American boys who are giving up and dropping out of the educational system. Why does this inequality persist among boys of color? Why does the consistent dropout rate plague boys of color? Why are they dropping out before their 12th grade graduation? I want to impact the future outcomes of the high school dropout epidemic. In addition to exploring the dropout rate, the ethnic diversity in the public-school environment continues to increase, therefore with the ethnic diversity in the school environment, it was valuable to explore the student experiences regarding this diversity among teachers. School administrators may use the data outcomes to change the current trajectory in public education to bring about a social change by eliminating the disproportionate dropout rate which currently exists.

I did not foresee that schools would close across the United States to stop the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Public education took on many forms. Participants selected for the study experienced schooling both in a virtual setting (online only) or in class on a A/B schedule.

The research question that guided this study was: What is the lived educational experiences of middle school African American males taught by a different race.

While using the Zoom platform, participants reported experiencing or observing the following codes. (1) Chilled, nice, caring teachers (2) Not getting help, mean,

discrimination (3) facing instructional challenges, lack of help when needed (4) desire to succeed (5) Classroom interaction with teacher) (6) Learn through visual aids (7) Not attending Zoom (8) The inability to create the same experience as being in class (Boring classes) (9) Juggling classes (10) More freedom on virtual environment.

The participants shared that their teachers had various personalities and characteristics. They stated, "Some teachers were nice and fun, while other personalities were chilled and mean." "There are no words," said one participant to describe the experience of his mean teacher. Participants shared that there was a lack of help and an overload of work. Participants experienced moments of giving up. The experiences of two participants showed forms of discrimination and racial profiling. Williams et al. (2018) suggests this type of negative experience can cause lower motivation and performance. In addition, the reactions shared similarities to post-traumatic stress disorder (Williams et al., 2018). The results of the participants showed those who experienced discrimination had lower grades during the occurrences. The resilience of two struggling participants was apparent when they chose to think of others (family and cousins) and set the right example by pushing their way through difficulty not giving up. They chose to change their mind-set as they both stated, "Life is hard sometimes, but you can make it! If you don't do it for yourself, do it for your brother or your cousins who are looking at you!" The following section describes the interpretation of the findings.

Interpretation of the Findings

The present study shared the perspectives of the lived experiences of seven African American middle school males taught by teachers of a different race in the

Southeastern United States. In the literature review, I focused on the relevant problem

confronting the United States educational system; the crisis of African American males'

academic achievement relative to their peers (Davis, 2003). Research up to this point has

reported the teachers' perspectives concerning the educational experiences of African

American students but failed to examine the perspective from the students' lived

experiences when mismatch exists. (Egalite et al., 2015). The findings solidify previous

studies conducted about the educational experiences of African American middle school

males, which consisted of subtle microaggressions, connecting with teachers, and

differences in learning styles.

Finding 1: Subtle microaggressions of unintentional racial discrimination

The basic qualitative study confirmed that participants experienced subtle

microaggression threats of unintentional racial discrimination in their school experience

daily (Wong et al., 2014). Participant 2 described his online teacher's experience similar

to how he fusses with his younger brother. There appeared to be no obvious reason for

the back-and-forth confrontation that began when he logged into the class. When the

teacher looked at him she seemed to be turned off. He reported he was often asked to

leave the class, for example he stated, "I just got on Zoom, and I'm asked to leave." He

felt angry and questioned what he did wrong. He felt there was a double standard when

European American peers were involved. He felt pre-judged by his teachers. He declared,

"She thinks I am bad, but I'm not!" Literature solidifies that when the cool pose is

evident in the boys walk, talk, hair, chains flashy clothes and mannerism, cool pose is

often misread by principals and teachers (Goleman, 1992). The premise of cool pose is to

portray that the individual is in control (Majors & Bilson, 1992). Teachers of a different race may interpret their mannerisms as threatening and the students is not interested in academics (Neal et al., 2003).

Similar comments were also made by other students: Participant 5 who said, "I am not doing anything but blamed for it. I felt targeted!" Participant 3 said, "I was blamed for what another kid did." With the zero-tolerance policy in place, the students could do nothing about the problem, so they learned how to deal with it. Previous research findings correspond. When African American students exhibited negative behaviors or became withdrawn, teachers may label them as problems and enforce a zero-tolerance disciplinary policy. The school mandates the policy to enforce predetermined consequences regardless of the situation (Vavrus & Cole, 2002). In this regard, APA (2008) emphasized the plausibility that zero tolerance policies can lead to higher rates of exclusionary actions, does not improve the safety of the school, but can lead to harmful effects of the individual and academics.

The daily encounters made some students feel like giving up and not trying academically. In Battey (2019) the researcher's findings confirmed that when African American males experience negative interactions with their teachers, they performed worse with a 16% decrease in academic achievement. The current findings were consistent with Kunjufu's (2013) study that when an African American male was suspended or removed from class it may be due to a cause as minor as the teacher not liking the way the student looked at her. Also, simple directives to talk quieter, take off their hat, or the altering of their walk (body language) have caused teachers to remove the

student from the classroom (Kunjufu, 1995). A basic assumption from the previous findings is when there is a lack of cultural awareness, teachers who are not astute to students of another cultural identity, may overreact and implement unenforceable rules (Armento, & Irvine, 2001).

Finding 2: Connecting with the Teacher

The second finding in the study was how participants connected with their classes when they connected with the teacher. Students were able to connect with their teacher when they saw that their teacher cared about them personally. When their teacher asked how they were doing, and smiled, participants felt a personal connection with them. When a connection was present participants wanted to do their work. Whereas participant number five did not feel a connection with his math teacher and states, "My teacher had little interaction with the class. Her focus was always on the textbook and not us." Thus, teachers who were favored by the participants were those who took the time to build a relationship with their students."

These findings were confirmed in the previous literature, Jefferies (2019) presented evidence that when African American males do not have a good teacher student relationship, low achievement can result. Also, Davis (1999) solidified the desire of African American males to have a personal connection with their teachers. He added when this is not present students felt that they were wrongfully misunderstood. In the present study this was seen when the participants felt a connection with their teacher, they described classes as fun and not boring. The participants expressed that even though

their teachers did what *normal teachers* do, teaching and enforcing rules, if they interacted with them the classes were deemed as "being lit!" Penick-Parks et al. (2018) supported this finding and suggested when students feel a connection and belonging, they were successful. In the guide for white women who teach black boys Penick-Parks et al. (2018) stated that "if we listen and change the way we think we connect to the student" (p. 258).

In the present study, teachers who were able to connect with the participants and showed their human side (compassion) by understanding the extensive workload of online learning, gave extra credit, and helped after Zoom were considered nice and understanding. Whereas participants relayed that teachers who called them out in an embarrassing way were mean. One participant described having feelings of frustration and anger but did not have other options to accept his teachers because he knew he had to go to school. He did not like his classes.

Finding 3: Cultural Learning Styles

The third finding was related to cultural learning styles and the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. Samuels (2018) discovered in his study that teachers who integrated culturally relevant pedagogy found it beneficial in building positive student teacher relationships while developing an understanding in the student's world view (Samuel. 2018). Also, the participants felt that cultural responsiveness-built trust, and had a potential to influence the dynamics of the classroom in a positive way. Samuels (2018) emphasized that teachers should have strategies to allow all students an opportunity to share in the discussion. When the strategies were implemented teachers saw increase in

the student's self-esteem and self-worth (Samuels, 2018). Students are encouraged to have an active voice in sharing their lived experiences.

Baines et al. (2018) cited the need to teach in culturally relevant ways. For example, by developing self-aware of the students' cultural differences and teacher biases may be the foundation to having a culturally relevant classroom. Also, Baines et al (2018) adds, a starting point for teachers may be to examine their bias and how they impact their students. For example, Baines et al. (2018) suggests even the mis pronunciation and the devalue of your students' names, can be biased.

Tanase (2020) cited the need for teachers to have many strategies to teach children. In addition to strategies a teacher must develop a cultural understanding of their students and their interest to alleviate racial tensions that might occur in the classroom. Tanase (2020) adds that the teaching and learning that occur in the classroom are shaped by the culture in the classroom. Thus, to ensure the success in the classroom the teacher must diversify the lessons, technique and any resources used. The teacher must have a mindset about her students (Tanase, 2020).

Hefflin (2002) provided an explanation of how to ensure that cultural relevant pedagogy is present in the classroom. For example, Hefflin (2002) called attention to having a framework that focused on the culture of the students. She proceeded to detail the importance of tailoring instructions to fit the cultural, social, and personal lives of the students. Therefore, the goal of having an increased academic performance is to include materials that help students use what they know and to help them develop new knowledge. Therefore, when teachers are able to tap into content that represents the

student's culture, and background, culturally relevant pedagogy is strengthened (Hefflin, 2002).

Milner (2011) adds a clear explanation of the outcomes of having a culturally relevant pedagogy classroom. The results include students who are empowered to succeed academically, have teachers who incorporate the student's culture in the curriculum, and student learning. Lastly, Milner (2011) adds it is important to develop culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom because it also helps to build cultural competence and develop relationships with the students. When students feel cultural relevancy Milner (2011) adds that students felt race was less of a problem, because teachers recognized them as individuals who had various needs.

Hale (2016) discussed mismatch between the cultures at school, and cultural discontinuity as a relevant problem. She adds that children feel comfortable and respond to learning when they feel comfortable (Hale, 2016). For example, when African American children's' teachers speaking to them like their mommas they are more receptive. The children like explicit language rather than indirect questioning voices. Also, African American children like a teaching still that catches their attention with rhythm and movement (Hale, 2016).

Rohrkemper (1984) noted that students of color perceive information differently from culturally different teachers. Thus, effective learning must come from the way individuals learn (Guild, 1994). "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn" (Giles, 2014, p.14). Hale denotes that it is important to be able to adapt your teaching to fit the student rather than try to get the student to

change.

Participants in the current study who had teachers with stimulating personalities and were energetic led to having successful classes. Participants stated that when teachers were outgoing and made jokes to enhance the lesson, the participants felt the classes were not boring. Boykin (1978) confirmed these findings and described the similarities of African American student cultural styles which reflect vestiges of the high levels of energy and communal sharing exhibited in the West African culture. Therefore, the literature suggests the effect of mismatched cultural learning styles can cause African American students to become bored and feel the school is unstimulating (Boykin, 1978; Gay, 2010).

All participants missed the human element of personal interaction with their teachers. Those who attended in-person classes, all experienced the need for teacher student interaction. Findings suggested that interactions may clash when a mismatch exist with African American students' cultural style. When a cultural match exists, students reported feeling more freedom and positive interactions between the student and the teacher.

Participants with higher grade point averages who attended in-person classes relayed that their classroom was empowering and allowed them to learn. This was due to teachers who exhibited a higher knowledge of the subject, used visuals, humor, and where students interacted with their teacher, helped to make learning fun.

The learning styles that participants felt accommodated them most was the teacher who did not rely totally on a book or slides, but rather who helped if they were

having problems. One participant stated, "I like the way she interacts. After nearly every sentence, she asks do you understand what I'm talking 'bout, so that we actually understand what she's saying." The teacher asked if she was going too fast or too slow. This display revealed that the teacher was demonstrating that the student was also valued in the classroom. Another finding concerned culturally responsive teaching experienced by the participants. This was the concern of being in a traditional classroom that does not acknowledge the African American culture in the classroom nor takes into consideration the needs of African American males leaning styles, and the need for movement. Two participants shared their learning disability of having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Participant 2-3 shared the constant problem of being distracted and the need to have more movement in the class to fit their needs. They explained, "I can't help it. I fidget, I can't sit down, I talk a lot." The participants (2-3) realized there were no intervention strategies offered for them. Just harsh discipline.

Finding 4: Single Sex Teachers

The fourth finding was related to the value of having same sex teachers. Grossberg (2019) called attention to teachers' differential between girls and boys, whereas in a single sex classroom male would not have to worry about being masculine, or pressures to act a certain way. The curriculum at an all-male school can demonstrate the interest of the male students. Findings in the current study, showed evidence concerning how the participants relate to their male teachers. The classes with male teachers were deemed fun; lessons presented a comic side that helped make classes exciting, memorable, and lit. Participant 3 shared his experience:

My science teacher is very, very, very cool! He's cool like for real! He's my

favorite teacher this year. We do a lot of Kahoot in his class. That's fun. We do a

lot of stuff, but on some days, we do Kahoot 3 days. Two days he may do a slide

show. He makes you want to get into it. What I mean by cool is he is suitable for

a teacher. It's hard to explain, but like he's a teacher and he's a helper.

Participant 7 added another example of having a male teacher. His male teacher, in ELA/

Social Studies appeared to be more knowledgeable about the subject: "He seems to know

more than my other teachers. I can tell by the way he talks." Literature affirmed that

African American boys have positive academic gains when they have male teachers (of

any race) and in particular teachers of color (Dee, 2005; Ouazad, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that supported the current basic qualitative study was

critical race theory (CRT) (Howard & Navarro, 2016). and oppositional cultural theory

(OCT). Specifically, critical race theory, was employed as a way to gain an understanding

of the effects of race on the daily educational experiences of African American middle

school males and how to eliminate it (Howard & Navarro, 2016). The major foundation

of critical race theory concentrated on the elimination of racism in all forms of American

society. In view of critical race theory's (CRT) commitment to eliminate all forms of

racism and inequality in the classroom, it is critical to utilize it as a valuable tool to

determine if racial mismatch affects the academic success among students of color. In

addition to critical race theory, oppositional cultural theory is a key component of the

theory resulting from the perception of students' unfair opportunity structure (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998).

Three participants shared negative experiences with teachers of a different race. The encounters produced feelings of being treated unfairly in comparison to their peers. Consequently, the participants wanted to give up and their grades suffered. OCT (Ogbu, 1991) was recognized in the study because it highlights possible reasons why some students disengage from school and give up. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) suggested that students might succumb to the pressures from their African American peers not to work hard in school. Implying that academic success is a form of "acting" White. In some cases, instead of aspiring to do well, participants gave up and were not liked by their teacher. Davis (2003) also includes that opposition can occur for students who are high achievers.

The concept of CRT is seen in that participants feelings of racism is a normal part that is an ingrained part of culture (Delgado & Stefancic 2001). The participants shared those racial inequalities are a normal occurrence with which they deal. CRT's aim is to halt all forms of existing racism (Howard & Navarro, 2016). The participants similar experiences solidified the concept of CRT.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of the present study was that the study occurred during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Due to the closing of schools around the United States participants selected in the study experienced lived experiences in a non-traditional classroom. The setting either allowed the student and teacher to connect either

synchronously (real-time) or asynchronously. The teaching environment was held online

platform (Zoom) which did not represent the interactions of a traditional classroom or an

A/B schedule consisting of Monday/ Tuesday or Thursday /Friday.

The second limitation was that the sample size was small but represented

saturation and was sufficient to identify themes. The third limitation was that the findings

may be difficult to generalize because the participants were limited to only 7 African

American middle school males taught by teachers of another race. All participants self-

identified as African American. All teachers who taught the 7 participants were European

American's.

The fourth limitation was that participants were from two middle schools located

in one school district in the Southeastern United States. The fifth limitation is that those

chosen for the study were seventh and eighth graders only. Due to the study's focus, the

sixth limitation was that the research was limited to participants from one racial group.

The seventh limitation to consider is if the study were to be conducted in the same

research design, after COVID-19 restrictions, students would be in a classroom setting

full time. Thus, the outcomes may change. The eighth limitation was how the interviews

were conducted via Zoom platform. Different outcomes may have occurred with in

person face to face interaction with the participants. In person interviews may have made

the participants more comfortable. Lastly, the ninth limitation is the lack of up-to-date

literature available about my research question. Most of the literature was dated material.

Recommendations

This study was conducted to explore the gap in knowledge concerning African American males' perspectives of being taught by teachers of a different race, regarding the students' perspectives. This research is just the beginning of the need for further study to close the educational gap. Research suggests that African American male's dropout rate occurs during high school, but the decision happens in middle school (Howard, 2012). For decades I have watched African American middle school males perform at a disproportionate rate than their peers. Alarming statistics of dropout rate have not drawn the attention necessary to bring about the needed awareness. This study is unique in that it documents the lived educational experiences of African American male students who have teachers of a different race. Prior research conducted share the teacher's perspective, but to bring awareness to the equity gap in education, I felt that the student's perspectives were necessary. The current study filled the gap through the lived educational experiences of African American middle school males taught by teachers of a different race. Based on the findings, recommendations for further research include the following.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions placed on the Southeastern United States, the interview process utilized online environments. Therefore, the first recommendation for the study would be to have interviewed face to face instead of on a Zoom platform. Lavrakas (2008) suggested that face to face (In-person) interviews allow for more in-depth interviews. The interviewer's presence makes it easier for the respondent to clarify their answers (Lavrakas, 2008). Also, it allows the interviewer to observe the body language and facial expression during the interview.

The second recommendation for future researchers would be assuring that participants attend in-school learning environments. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic all participants did not have that experience of being in person with their teachers. Third, I would recommend that participants are eighth graders only. I feel interviewing an older student would bring maturity and awareness to his perspectives in school. The fourth recommendation for future research will be to add another school district to the study. This will advance the perspectives of urban, suburban, and rural communities. The fifth recommendation in the study was to increase the number of participants. The current study reached saturation at seven participants. Larger sample size could produce more perspectives and reliability that is needed to obtain quality outcomes (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

Future researchers may wish to conduct a quantitative study in which they examine the academic success of black male students as a function of ethnicity and gender of the teachers. Or alternatively, a mixed methods study doing the above and capturing the experiences of students who are academically successful versus those who are not.

Implications

There is an existing crisis of African American middle school males' academic achievement relative to their peers (Davis, 2003). A study conducted by John Hopkins University provided evidence that there is a link to the disproportionate rate of minority students and teacher staff (Rosen, 2015). The disproportionate rate of teacher student can be problematic because it may have an impact on academic performance when teacher

mismatch exists. This study contributed valuable data from the perspective of the students lived educational experience.

A potential impact for positive social change in the public school system is to examine African American male students and male teachers when success occurs. Research suggests that the lack of African American male teachers can be crucial in the development of African American males (Nicolas, 2014). But African American male teachers only make up a mere 1.81% of the teacher workforce. Just one teacher who mirrors a student's race reduces the probability of dropout rates by 29% (Gershenson et al., 2017). And having a male teacher (any race) lowers the African American dropout rate.

The research findings in this study presented data that confirmed six out of seven of the participants had positive experiences with their male teachers. The power of similar role models in the lives of African American students has been linked to academic success (Wolstein & Diamant, 2016). Recent studies have focused on African American teachers in the classroom as potential role models for African American male students (Brown, 2012). African American boys need to see adults like them who are successful. If the individual happens to be an educator, that is ideal. Even though the majority of students are minority, less than 20% of teachers in the workforce are African Americans females, and African American male teachers make up only 2%. The school environment is a second home for most K-12 students. Therefore, African American boys have minimal role models that look like. To ensure the success of students in 2015, a school implemented 100 African American role models who greeted students on the first day of

school. The men were dressed in business suits to show the students what success looked like.

Creating a positive change might include all male teachers or mentors for African American males who are experiencing academic difficulty (Gershenson et al., 2017). African American students who experience having a same race teacher whether man or female for at least one year in elementary are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to go to college. Having a same race teacher create trust, personal connections and build confidence that help students to be successful (Gershenson et al., 2017). When helping students from diverse backgrounds (Gershenson, et al., 2017) suggests building rapport and making connects is vital.

Next, the findings can help administrators, teachers and support staff address the issues identified in the research study. Identifying personal bias, building a better teacher-student relationship, understanding and cultural learning styles, can help the educational gap between African American middles school males and their peers.

The research outcomes support the need for a social change in the area of negative stereotyping of African American male students when mismatch exists, it hurts their self-esteem. A similar finding reports that teachers' subtle messages can be interpreted to African American middle school males as incapable learners (Ball & Tyson, 2011).

To bring about a social change the present research can be shared with middle schools in the United States. Teacher workshops can be developed to discuss and implement the findings. Beginning with teacher activities to demonstrate, teach, and recognize the everyday slights, indignities, put-downs, and insults of unintentional racial microaggressions. In addition to workshops, improving the teacher student relationship is essential. The research findings note more interaction was linked to African American male achievement. Utilizing interaction with the teacher is important. Cultural teaching styles and designing lesson plans that are engaging for African American male students may contribute to their success. Thus, teacher workshops can contribute to developing personalized cultural teaching styles to fit the cultural needs of the students.

In the beginning of the school year, workshops can be offered as professional development for all teachers. Incentives such as Continuing Education Units (CEU) should be offered as continued education credits. Specialized speakers should come in to motivate staff concerning the importance of their role in educating African American males.

To bring about a positive social change and to improve the life course of African American boys, it would be beneficial to incorporate a culturally responsive intervention program by enlisting the help of role models who are both successful in their professional life and personal. For example, the Divine Nine, African American Fraternities can be enlisted to adopt a middle school and mentor a male student from middle school until high school graduation (Harper, 2007). Lastly, Kunjufu stated, "If we want to improve school culture, we must understand their world" (p. xvi). I hope that the findings from

this study brings awareness to teachers of a different race, understand the world that African American middle school males come from. Thus, bringing a voice to them and their education.

Conclusion

This research has been a motivating factor in my life for many years. When I was in middle school, my dad was stationed in Long Beach, California. With all the privilege of being a military brat, I had no experience concerning life in the inner city. Then we moved to Compton, California. My first predominate African American school. I met a very talented street-wise kid that I thought was giving up. He slept in class and was angry all the time and did not want to be bothered. Then I found out why. Just the mention of his name Jaylen (Not his real name), teachers would sigh. Everyone had given up on him.

African American boys are four times as likely as their peers to be suspended than their peers. The Yale child study center revealed data to why this disparity exists. In the study the researchers conducted, teachers had to watch videos to identify challenging behavior (Brown, 2016). Forty-two percent of the teachers identified challenging behavior exhibited in African American boys. Interestingly no behavior challenges existed in the videos seen. Yet the teachers observed African Americans closer. This was Jay's life, constantly targeted for misbehavior, when it did not always exist. Implicit bias, sometimes subconscious stereotypes help by teachers can lower African American expectations (Brown, 2016; Gilliam et al., 2016).

I befriended Jay and he let his guard down. I found out that Jay was the oldest of several siblings. Jay was responsible for taking care of them while his mom worked. He

often stayed up late just to make sure everyone was ok, then he would wake up early to get them ready for school. He fell asleep because he was tired. Crucial to the life of the student are teachers who support and understand family struggles (Gilliam et al., 2016). Understanding struggles can help understand the behavior of the student.

Lastly, Jay shared his love for writing and drawing with me. Why did his English teacher not recognize his talents? They knew about mine. Weeks later, Jay died from a drive by shooting. When I gave his mom his book of poems, no one knew he loved writing. How did this happen to this talented student? I vowed on that day, never to let another Jay fall through the cracks.

Final Comments

It is vital that teachers 'understand diverse students, have shared experiences through a cultural and gender match. When better understanding is present, teachers and students succeed. The research findings from this study revealed a diversity of opinions concerning being taught by teachers of a different race. The elimination of educational disparities in the classroom is a goal of my research. The racial achievement gap revealed that *all* students are not treated equally. While some participants did not feel that race was the major problem, they assert that the lack of interaction contributed to a lack in teacher student relationships. There must be serious steps towards professional learning opportunities for all teachers. In order to close the gap, teachers must create a non-stereotypical and non-biased classroom environment that embraces African American cultural learning styles. Lastly, participants in my study shared their heart felt advice to teachers of a different race. They said, "Don't give up on the students. Don't judge us.

Remember, equality regardless of race. When things get hard, keep a positive outlook and

don't stop caring about children, because it's not about race…it's about teaching!"

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Appendix A: Parental Consent Form

PARENT CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

Your child is invited to take part in a research study about the academic experiences of African American middle school males who are taught by teachers of a different race. The researcher is inviting African American middle school males to be in the study. to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to allow your child to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Pamela L. Ward, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to examine the educational experiences of African American middle school males who are taught by teachers of a different race.

Procedures:

This study involves the following steps:

If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, your child will be asked to:

- Share his academic experiences while being taught by a teacher of a different race.

- Take part in an audio recorded interview via Zoom

- Share his academic experiences for approximately a half hour to an hour.

- Be interviewed one time to collect necessary data. (please note: if unclear answers need clarifying, the student may be asked to discuss his answer at a later date).

Here are some sample questions:

- What is it like being an African American male in a class with a teacher of a different race?

- Can you tell me something you wish your teacher knew about you that could help your academics?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So everyone involved will respect you and your child's decision about whether or not they join the study. After obtaining parent consent, each child will be asked if they wish to volunteer (this is called child assent and is required in addition to parent consent). You and your child will be treated the same at the public-school system and will not treat you or your child differently if you or your child decides to not be in the study. If you decide to consent now, you or your child can still change your minds later. Your child can stop at any time. The researcher is seeking to capture the lived experiences of 7-12 African American

middle school male volunteers for this study. If you decide to consent now, you or your child can still change your minds later. Your child can stop at any time. "Please note that not all volunteers will be contacted to take part in the study. Because we value your willingness to contribute to the study, the researcher will follow up with all volunteers to let them know whether or not they were selected for the study."

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that your child might encounter in daily life, such as such as retelling of school experiences that may be upsetting. Being in this study would not pose risk to your child's safety or wellbeing. With the protections in place, being in this study would pose minimal risk to your child's wellbeing. If I feel the participant is in a psychological state. I will refer the parents to John Carrol, a licensed therapist.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. The aim of this study is to benefit society by helping the academic success of African American middle school males on a global scale and decrease the current dropout rates.

Please be aware that I am required by law to report any evidence of child abuse to the appropriate authorities. There are no questions in the interview that specifically address this issue.

Payment:

Upon completion of the interviewing process, the participants will be given a $10.00 gift card, to thank them for participating in the study.

Privacy:

The researcher is required to protect the privacy of both you and your child. Your child's identity will be kept secure by the researcher. The data collected will be kept in a locked file. The participants names will be replaced by the use of codes in place of names within the limits of the law. The researcher is a mandated reporter and will only need to share your child's name or information if the researcher learns about possible harm to your child or someone else. The researcher will not use your family's personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your child's name or anything else that could identify your child in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the researcher is required to remove all names and identifying details before sharing; this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by data will be kept securely by password protected flash or thumb drive. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You can ask questions of the researcher by phone, or email any concerns. If you want to talk privately about your child's rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university. Walden University's approval number for this study is 11-30-20-0279034 and it expires on November 29, 2021.

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent

by _reply to this email with "I consent."

Printed Name of Parent

Printed Name of Child

Date of consent

Parent's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix B: Assent Form for Research

ASSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

Hello, my name is Pamela L. Ward and I am doing a research project to learn about African American middle school male's academic success when taught by teachers of a different race. I am inviting you to join my project. I am inviting all African American middle school males who have been taught by teachers of a different race to be in the study. I am inviting Craven County, middle school African American males, age 12-14 to be in the study. I am going to read this form with/to you. I want you to learn about the project before you decide if you want to be in it.

WHO I AM:

I am a student at Walden University. I am working on my doctoral degree. You might already know me as working in the educational field, but this study is separate from that role.

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

This study involves the following steps:

- You will be invited to share your academic experiences while being taught by a teacher of a different race.

- You will be asked to take part in an audio recorded interview via Zoom

- You will be asked to participate by sharing your academic experiences for approximately a half hour to an hour.

- I will interview you one-time to collect necessary data. (please note: if unclear

  answers need clarifying, you may be asked to discuss your answer at a later date).

Here are some sample questions:

- What contributed to your overall success or failure in middle school?

- What experiences have you had with teachers of a different race?

- What is it like being an African American male in a class with a teacher of a

  different race?

- What do you think may cause an African American male student to give up and

  not want to learn?

IT'S YOUR CHOICE:

You don't have to be in this project if you don't want to. Everyone involved will respect

your decision to join or not. You will be treated the same at your public-school system

and will not treat you differently if you decide to not be in the study. If you decide to join

the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. I am

looking for 7-12 African American middle school male volunteers for this study.

Being in this project might make you tired or stressed, just like taking an exam. You

might feel minor discomforts that you might encounter in daily life, such as retelling of

school experiences that may be upsetting, but you can stop at any time if you feel

stressed. But I am hoping this project might help others by sharing the academic success

of African American middle school males on a global scale and decrease the current

dropout rates.

Upon completion of the interviewing process, you will be given a $10.00 gift card, to thank you for participating in the study.

PRIVACY:

I am required to protect your privacy. That means no one else will know your name or what answers you gave. The only time I have to tell someone is if I learn about something that could hurt you or someone else.

ASKING QUESTIONS:

You can ask me any questions you want now. If you think of a question later, you or your parents can reach me by phone or by email. If you or your parents would like to ask my university a question, you can call Dr. Leilani Gjellstad.

If you want to volunteer, please Continue.

Name of Child

Child Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Schooling

1. Tell me about your teachers this year. Follow-up: more than one teacher.

2. What are their names?

3. What are the differences that you see in your teachers? Let's start with

    Ms./Mr._____, what do you see in her/him?

4. What do you like about your teachers? Let's start with

    Ms./Mr.____, what do you like in her/him?

5. What do you *not* like about your middle school teachers? Let's start with

    Ms./Mr._____ what do you not like in her/him?

6. What do you like about your middle school classes?

    Let's start with Ms./Mr._____, what do you like about her/his classes?

Response: What would you like to change about Ms./Mr._____ classes?

8. What makes Ms./Mr._____ classroom a place to learn?

9. What do you think may cause an African American male student to give up and not want to learn in Ms./Mr. _____classroom?

10. What contributed to your overall success or failure in Ms./Mr._____ classroom?

Academics Success / Failure

1.   What type of grades do you get?

Success Response:

Why do you think you get good grades?

Failure Response:

a.   Why do you think you are failing?

b.   How do you feel when you fail?

Mismatched Teachers

1.   What makes a good teacher? Complete this sentence…a good teacher is someone

who….?

2.   What is it like being an African American male in a class with a teacher of a

different race?

3.   Can you give me an example of when a teacher of a different race had a positive

affect or negative affect in your schooling (grades)?

Question After Response:

a.   Why do you think having a teacher of a different race is a benefit for you?

b.   Why do you think having a teacher of a different race is a struggle for you?

4.   Can you tell me something you wish your teacher knew about you that could help

your schooling (grades)?

Struggles in School

1.   What has been a major obstacle (problem) in school?

2.   Tell me about a time when you thought you were treated unfair in school? How did you feel?

3.   What has been the best or worst thing that has happened with a teacher of a different race?
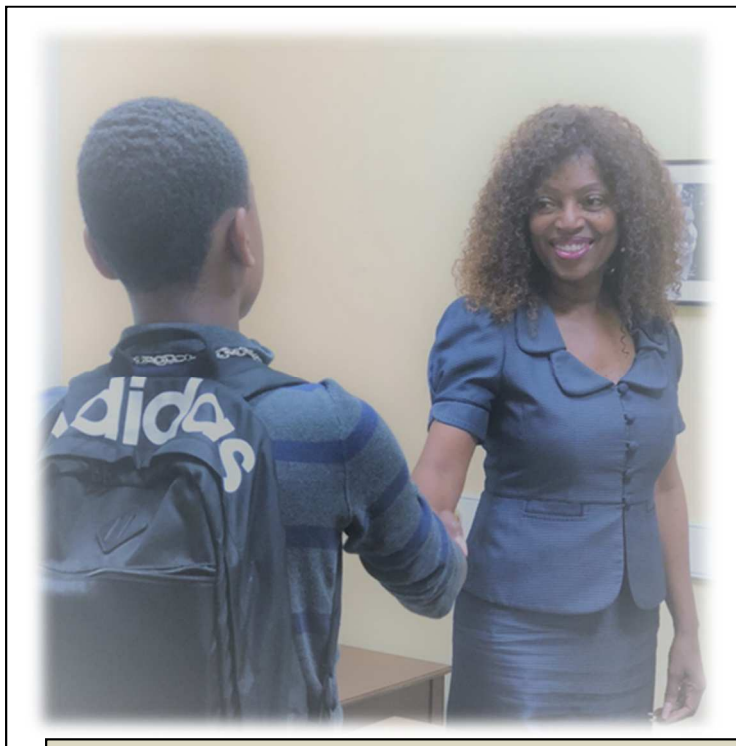
Response:

a.   Tell me more…what happened next.

4.   In school what types of things make you happy?

5.   In school, what types of things have made you angry?

6.   What are some ways to improve your class/school?

Straight Talk…What I Want People to Know

1.   What advice would you give to teachers of a different race?

2.   What advice would you give students who have teachers of a different race?

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

I NEED YOUR HELP

Are you eligible to participate in a research study?

Are you in Middle School?
Are you an African American MALE?
Do you have a teacher of a different race?

If so, I would love to talk with you and arrange a convenient time and a local place for an interview.

Contact:
Pamela L. Ward, M.Phil.

Walden University

I am conducting a research study on the Academic success of African American male students taught by a teacher of a different race.

Appendix E: Categories Codes Themes

	Categories
Category 1	Qualities of a good teacher
Category 2	Ineffective teacher/ Mismatch
Category 3	Outcomes in online middle school classes
Category 4	Success / failure in class
Category 5	Rapport with students
Category 6	Learning styles
Category 7	Giving up due to stress
Category 8	Ineffective lessons for students
Category 9	Demands in online platform
Category 10	Obstacles in online platform

	Codes
Theme 1	Chilled, nice, and caring teachers
Theme 2	Not getting help, mean, discrimination
Theme 3	Instructional challenge for teachers, technology challenges in the virtual platform for student
Theme 4	Having a desire to succeed
Theme 5	Classroom interactions with the teacher made class fun
Theme 6	Learn through visual aids
Theme 7	Not attending Zoom (gave up) no help
Theme 8	Boring classes, inability to create the same experience as being in class

Theme 9   Juggling classes (Too much work)

Theme 10   The need for more freedom on virtual

.

	Themes
Code 1	Nice
Code 2	No help
Code 3	Easy
Code 4	Want to learn
Code 5	Interactions
Code 6	Visuals
Code 7	Give up
Code 8	Boring
Code 9	Too much work
Code 10	Freedom