Perspectives from African American Male Rural School Leaders Regarding Targeted Recruitment Strategies for Future African American Male Rural School Leaders

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Introduction

Known as pillars, leaders, and role models in their Black communities, African American male principals were prominent members of society pre-*Brown* and for several years after the *Brown versus Board of Education* decision (Tillman, 2004). Tillman (2004) noted that "teaching was a significant profession in the Black community and served as a primary leadership role" (p. 282). Before the *Brown* court case, there were 82,000 Black teachers; however, after the *Brown* court case, 38,000 or more Black educators had lost their positions including teachers and principals (Tillman, 2004). Both history and research have shown that students both Black and White benefit from minority teachers. Researchers emphasize that when children are taught by the same race and gender of their teachers, academic improvement occurs (Bristol & Mento, 2018). Conversely, not all students experience the same benefits from non-minority teachers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, "by 2040, people of color will be the majority of the United States citizens" (Goings & Bianco, 2016, p. 628). Wallace and Gagen (2019) reported that 82% of the current teaching force in the United States are White middle-class women, while 18% of teachers are made up of African Americans, Native Americans, and the Hispanic population. What is even more disturbing is that African American male teachers make up less than 2% of the teaching force in the United States (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Goings & Bianco, 2016; Wallace & Gagen, 2019). In a nutshell, our children of color will be taught by White middle-class valued females. Equally, children of color can attend schools and not encounter an educator who looks like them. At the same time, many children of color may not ever get the opportunity to be educated by an African American male teacher. "There is growing concern that

the current pool of school teachers and administrators does not mirror the growing racial/ethnic diversity of students" (Moore, Michael and Penick-Parks, 2018, p. 47). In addition, a young sixth-grade African American boy could easily continue this trajectory of only having White female teachers not until he reaches high school. Lewis (2006) noted, "Today's students could easily go 12 years in the K-12 educational system without ever seeing an African American, specifically an African American male teacher" (p. 229). At the same time, there are a limited number of minority leaders in our schools for this same student to observe. We all know that leaders, whether it be the principal or district central office, determine the hiring of teachers, and based on the current demographics in the field of education, many of these principals and district leaders have hired teachers who are not ethnically diverse. The question becomes, how do we develop educational leaders that have an in-depth understanding of the need to not only actively seek educators of diverse backgrounds but to also enhance the learning experience for all students? As stated earlier, the research and history are clear on the impact a teacher has on their students. Equally, getting a diverse pool of teachers in place, we must begin with the examination of the school's leadership and leadership development begins with principal preparation programs for targeted recruitment of future African American male rural school leaders.

Ethno- Humanistic Role Identity

Many principal preparation programs work toward including coursework to inform candidates of what cultural diversity looks like as a leader but perhaps what is missing is the actual implementation of what candidates have learned. What is the concept of implementation? Simply put, how is the follow through or impact of what aspiring leaders learn in their program measured in their schools? Is there a way to measure through the types of teachers they hire,

professional learning provided or even schools served to determine the impact of their cultural leadership development in the principal preparation programs? The dearth of research into the development of culturally diverse school leaders, contributes to the lack of understanding of what it means to be a culturally responsive school leader and the assumption that a culturally informed leader is based on ethnicity. This assumption lends itself to a deeper question for principal preparation programs, as to how we measure our effectiveness in the development of culturally responsive school leaders. In Siddle-Walker's book, Hello Professor, she quotes the then-president of Howard University, Mordecai Johnson, in a keynote speech at the potential merger of the two segregated associations (Walker, 2009). The line from his speech that is clearly and abundantly relevant to leaders in our diverse schools today where, Siddle-Walker summaries his points stating that he suggested:

> "resoundingly that the attendees had risen above constrained educational circumstances and that they had in their knowledge base the tools needed to help others succeed in ways they had. Thus the goal of these leaders must be able to imagine the possibilities in the children and help them likewise succeed." (Walker, 2009, p. 99)

Today we call this Ethno-Humanism or Ethno-Humanistic Role Identity. How impactful this statement is to educational leaders today, having the belief that students can achieve and creating the opportunities for it to happen, within each of our schools. To be clear, Ethno- Humanist Role Identity, as defined by Dr. Lomotey "encompasses commitment to the education of all students; confidence in the ability of all students to do well; and compassion for and understanding of all students and the communities in which they live" (Lomotey, 1989, p. 131). So how do we help aspiring leaders in principal preparation programs develop the skill set needed to create and develop schools whose community has shared experiences that will help students achieve? In

addition, what factors do current practicing school leaders believe have led to the underrepresentation of African American males in school leadership roles in K-12 schools, specifically, rural schools? Our study examines the factors African American male rural school leaders believe are contributing to the underrepresentation of African American males in school leadership roles in K-12 rural schools and recommendations for consideration in developing a more diverse teaching and administrator workforce through cultivating more opportunities thus utilizing revisions of principal preparation programs and creative targeted recruitment practices.

Background Literature

Need for More African American Male Educators

The need for more African American male educators has been a problem for more than 60 years (Brown, 2012). As stated earlier, researchers emphasize that when children are taught by the same race and gender of their teachers, academic improvement occurs (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Since Former President Obama's election, their continues to be discussions centered on the importance of African American male educators in schools serving as role models and surrogate father figures to African American boys (Brown, 2012). As the demographics of our classrooms are shifting to more Black and Brown children, our teaching force has been quite slow in making this shift. As previously stated, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, "by 2040, people of color will be the majority of the United States citizens" (Goings & Bianco, 2016, p. 628).

In reviewing the literature, we will focus on the current discourse around the underlying purpose of African American male teacher recruitment, the underlying expectations of the African American male teacher, and the need for a diverse teaching force along with the importance of effective principal preparation recruitment efforts.

The Underlying Purpose of African American Male Recruitment

The current discourse around the need for African American male teachers is focused on being a role model and surrogate father. Recruitment efforts focus on recruiting African American male teachers to serve in these roles for African American boys. The assumption is that because a person is an African American male teacher, they can work with African American boys in the role of being a role model and surrogate father versus an educator (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Pabon's (2016) study examined the personal experiences of four African American male teachers working in urban schools and the lessons they learned from their teaching and recruitment. The findings revealed that those African American males had been positioned as Black Superman, a system that continues to be in place in schools to push them out of the field of education. This schooling-out process, according to the study, is revealed in these male preparation programs for teaching and the pressure to conform to traditional standardized methods of teaching from the White group.

African American male educators have been identified in the literature where their role is to "secure, administer and govern the unruly Black boy in schools" (Brown, 2012, p. 229). Therefore, the premise is for African American male teachers to handle the African American boy before they step a foot inside the classroom as a classroom teacher (Brown, 2012). This phenomenon is called Pedagogical Kind. Pedagogical Kind is defined as "a type of educator whose subjectivities, pedagogies and expectations have been set in place prior to entering the classroom" (Brown, 2012, p. 299). If the African American male teacher were not there to work with African American boys, there would be no reason for them to be in education (Brown, 2012). The message is that African American male teachers are in schools for African American boys; otherwise, their presence becomes useless (Brown, 2012).

The Underlying Expectation of the African American Male Educator

In 2010, a campaign arose called "5 by 2015," where the then Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, identified a goal of increasing the teaching force in the United States with African American male teachers by 2015 (Brown, 2012). However, these recruitment strategies centered around African American male teachers becoming primary disciplinarians first towards African American boys, followed by teachers (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). This is the underlying expectation for Black male educators that other populations who enter the teaching field do not have placed upon them. African American male teachers are typically placed in dual roles of teacher and disciplinarian as they maintain order and discipline in schools. This system of keeping regulations and controls is known as the universal carceral apparatus (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). The universal carceral apparatus, similar to images of mini-prisons for children of color, is "organized as extensions of prisons for historically marginalized children of color" (Bristol & Mentor, 2018, p. 219-220). Similar to jail, these schools have surveillance equipment, metal detectors, and monitoring devices to observe the behaviors of students (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). African American male teachers become gatekeepers or correctional officers to African American boys in schools. Since African American male teachers have been defined as the sole social agent of change in schools for African American boys, their role as disciplinarian within schools matched the current discourse among researchers and policymakers (Brown, 2012).

Relatedly, while Wallace and Gagen (2019) address the barriers and the need for recruitment and support for African American male teachers, Brown (2012) and Bristol and Mentor (2018) focus on the realities of the positioning of African American male teachers in schools. According to Brown (2012), because African American boys are labeled with such negative, derogatory terms, the savior for them is the African American male teacher. Therefore,

the focus is on gender and race connections as opposed to intelligence and the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogical practices.

In the study by Bristol and Mentor (2018), African American male teachers discussed their after school duty positions as being placed in the front of the school building by the school administrator. Utilizing the concept of the universal carceral apparatus, these men were responsible for securing the premises upon the dismissal of students. Two additional participants in this study described their classroom as "unofficial time out rooms," with the unwritten expectation that they could handle disciplinary problems (Bristol & Mentor, 2018, p. 227).

Diversification of the Teaching and Leading Force

To counter these negative underlying perceptions of African American male teachers, schools must create a diverse teaching force (Bristol & Mentor, 2018; Wallace & Gagen, 2019). Diverse educators bring a wealth of knowledge, structure, concepts, culture, ethnicity, and community into the classroom to educate and teach our children of color (Wallace & Gagen, 2019). "Teacher diversity initiatives could be bolstered with a clearer understanding of how educators of color perceive their school-based experiences" (Bristol & Mentor, 2018, p. 219). A diverse teaching population can help dismantle the negative imagery, stereotypes, and socially constructed perceptions of African American men and African American male educators, thus creating counternarratives of positive experiences for students (Wallace & Gagen, 2019).

Secondly, in terms of leading, it is important to continue encouraging black males to enter the teaching profession, so they may be identified for principal preparation programs by the districts in which they serve. With programs such as the Teacher Institute, that focuses on recruiting black males out of high school for teacher preparation, the programs could use the same teachers to establish a black male leadership program from the same teacher leader pool.

With the dearth of research being done on black male recruitment to principal preparation programs and the perspective and lived experiences of African American male K-12 rural school leaders, it is important that we develop initiatives that focus on supporting a high level recruitment to create the need for more diverse school leaders leading our ever-changing diverse student populations. As Black male teachers are in the classroom, their "intellectual, scholarly, math and artistic knowledge and capacities" are far more valuable than merely a Black body in the school to discipline African American boys (Wallace & Gagen, 2019, p. 312).

Summary

There is a need for more African American male teachers to work with African American boys. Though singularly portrayed as disciplinarians by current and previous scholars, politicians, and policymakers, African American male educators can utilize their skills to create learning environments for all students to be academically successful. Their contributions inside of the classroom and leading schools is a valuable commodity within our ever changing student demographic population. African American males can provide leadership within the classrooms and leading schools despite various labeling and the underlying expectation being placed upon them. In addition, well-prepared African American male teachers can move forward in their careers and serve as African American male assistant principals and principals through an effective principal preparation program. As noted earlier, the current teaching force statistic is bleak, therefore, contributing to an equally limited pool of qualified African American males to become school leaders.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory rests upon five tenets: Whiteness as Property, the Permanence of Racism, Critique of Liberalism, Interest Convergence, and Counternarratives or

Counterstorytelling (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Parker, Deyhle and Villenas, 1999; Rodriguez & Greer, 2017). Our study focuses on the tenant of Counter Storytelling.

Counter Storytelling

Critical Race Theory scholars utilize storytelling as a means to counter the current negative perceptions and stereotypes of individuals of color (Taylor, 1998). Since stories created by the dominant group present their level of superiority, "it is necessary to create stories to counter the dominant narrative" (Cook, 2013, p. 185). The ability to connect with personal stories touches the mind and penetrates the heart of a person (Cook, 2013). Ladson-Billings (2013) defines storytelling as "one of the oldest human art forms" (p. 41). Ladson-Billings (2013) noted, "Stories or narratives have been shared in every culture as a means of entertainment, education and cultural preservation and to instill moral values" (p. 41). Critical Race Theory allows for storytelling by people of color to counter the existing narratives communicated by the dominant group and present the authentic experiences of people of color by people of color (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a, 2002b).

There are three types of counter storytelling: personal narratives, other people's stories, and composite stories (Cook, 2013; DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a, 2002b). Personal stories or narratives are individuals, typically in an autobiography format, sharing their experiences of racism. Other people's stories or narratives are when an individual is writing the stories of another person's experience with racism. Typically, this approach occurs through biographies and in the field of education with Critical Race Theory scholars. Composite stories or narratives are a combination of data sources to create

the group narrative regarding the experiences of race and racism (DeCuir-Gunby & Walker-DeVose, 2013).

Methodology

Brief Description of Methods

In this study, a basic qualitative research with elements of phenomenology was employed with three 60- to 90-minute interviews with African American male school leaders in rural communities in North Carolina were conducted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In North Carolina, "Eighty of the NC 100 counties are classified as rural schools" (Public School Forum, 2019, p. 6). Based on our interview protocol instrument, these semi-structured open-ended and in-depth interviews created counternarrative stories of this populations' perspective regarding recruitment of future African American male school leaders. Using purposeful sampling, this study utilized information on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction website to identify African American male rural school leaders. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Educator Directory database identified rural as rural-distant, rural fringe and rural remote. Interviews occurred either in person or online using Zoom's platform for recording, and transcripts were transcribed for data analysis by a third-party vendor.

Based on the analysis of the transcripts from the interviews, two themes were generated that served to answer research question: What factors do current practicing school leaders believe have led to the underrepresentation of African American males in school leadership roles in K-12 schools, specifically, rural schools? Addressing trustworthiness, our study employed member checking, rich, thick descriptions, and ongoing reflection with research reflexivity journaling. In terms of ethical considerations, informed consent forms were reviewed with

participants, and pseudonymized names were used to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the study participants.

Results

African American Male School Leaders in Rural Communities Recognize a Lack of Opportunities in the Education Profession for African American Boys

With the changing student population demographics and the declining percentage of African American male educators, the need to understand why African American boys are not choosing a career in education is critical for effective change. The study participants shared their perspectives of why African American boys were not choosing a career in education. From their perspective, the following aspect of the lack of role models in education and future financial stability lead to this belief system.

Lack of African American Male Role Models

My participants shared their beliefs regarding why African American boys were not choosing a career in education. Many shared that the young boys do not have educators or role models in education who look like them.

Mr. Ray spoke about this lack of African American male role models in education. He shared,

> Okay. First of all, they don't have enough role models. They don't see enough male role models in education, especially at the elementary level, because a lot of people wanna know why I chose the elementary level to teach. And I said, "We need African-American males in the elementary level." Um, and, um, so, so that's, that's a big one. Um, then obviously I could say in general too, just from what I know, not only in schools, they don't have a lot of male role models, good real male role models at home either.

Mr. Ray recognized the need for African American boys to see African American male school leaders leading at the elementary level. In addition, these African American male school leaders may serve as surrogate fathers to elementary African American boys during their formative years. Mr. Ray saw a need to serve as both a school leader and role model at the elementary level to impact boys of color.

Mr. Kirkpatrick also shared a similar standpoint regarding African American boys' need to see African American male school leaders in elementary settings. He shared,

> I don't think that they see many examples of people who look like them, um, especially early on in, um, elementary school. Um, they probably see more of that, that the high school and middle school. And a lot of times that person is really going to be a coach or a physical education teacher.

Mr. Kirkpatrick noted that if African American boys see African American males in education, it is typically not as school administrators. Equally, there is a need for our elementary boys to see examples of African American males in roles of school leadership.

Mr. Williams's comments summarize this concept, with the reality of our future and the need for more recruitment towards the field of education. As our interview concluded, he shared,

> And so we just can't give up on them. We just can't give up these young, young ones. And we can't give up on education. And we got to continue to let particular Black males and female to know that we need them. The kids need you. The future depends on you. Because if you don't go into education, who's going to train and teach them how to be Black? How to let them know that you made it? Because you don't want to – we don't

want to go backwards, and I'm afraid if we don't start recruiting and don't start getting

more people that look like these kids, um, it will go backwards.

Mr. Williams shared the importance of legacy and educating the next generation of males.

According to Mr. Williams, our African American boys need African American male educators

to teach them about being Black in America.

Future Financial Stability

The study participants shared their beliefs associated with the future financial stability

and the African American boys' perception of the field of education. Several mentioned the

male's role in the home and the need for finances to support their future lifestyle.

Mr. Ray shared his belief and the initial realities of a starting salary of beginning teachers. He

shared,

> Um, I will also say that, you know, for those who are fortunate enough to make it through
>
> high school and go off to college, I don't think education is attracted to them because it's
>
> really hard. It has gotten better in North Carolina, but it's not, still not great to be able to
>
> raise a family on a teaching salary. So if you're the male and you're the sole, if you're the
>
> main provider in your household, it's that is not that attractive. You know, come on, I
>
> mean, you can go to the community college and get, you know, um, certificate in welding
>
> and come out making $40,000 a year starting.

Mr. Ray compares the starting salary of a community college graduate and the lack of an initial

high salary for a beginning teacher in North Carolina. In addition, the African American boy

may desire to support a family, and the initial North Carolina teaching salaries are difficult to

help this decision.

Mr. Kirkpartick, when asked why African American males were not choosing the field of education, he shared about potentially racist behaviors and the lack of financial gains. He shared,

> Um, and another thing is the way people perceive, still perceive Black males, um, that the images and the, the stereotypes that are often conveyed, um, through TV and through music, um, this implicit bias is real. Um, and, and people see us in a certain light and, and, and we know that people see us in that light. Um, and you're saying, I'm not going to go to a field where (laughs) where I'm already not making a lot of money and then have to deal with that too. At least if I'm going to be able to deal with that, let me go somewhere and deal with them where I'm making a money where I can live, uh, enough money where I can live and I have to work two or three jobs just to support me and my family. Um, so I, you know, I think that, that's a real issue too. Um, the, the economic part of it as well, um, is that Black men want to make money. They want to be, um, be able to provide support. Uh, and so it is less attractive to them in that sense.

Mr. Kirkpatrick recognizes the negative perceptions that African American males experience due to the media's portrayal of them. He rationalizes that if African American males must experience these negative racial behaviors, why would they self-select to enter the field of education without proper compensation.

Mr. Williams shared his belief regarding why African American boys are not choosing a career in education. He shared,

> Hmm. Well, number one, I think it's, it's the money. (laughs). They don't make enough money to, um, take care of the appetite they have, where it's, get this brand-new car, get this house, or these fulfilling those dreams. That's number one.

He continued:

> Number two is that no one is telling them about education. That's two as far as being a
> teacher. But they don't tell them that you don't have to stay as the teacher. They're just a
> stepping stone, and you become a principal or a superintendent, um, case.

Mr. Williams recognizes the need for continuous exposure of promotional opportunities found in education. These promotional opportunities yield higher financial compensation for the African American boy.

There Is a Lack of Targeted Recruitment of African American Males Toward the Field of Education

The study participants shared the importance of targeted recruitment of the African American males to increase representation in K-12 rural schools. From their perspective, there is a need for targeted recruitment and how to address the negative perceptions of the African American male.

Targeted Recruitment of the African American Male

My participants shared the importance of targeted recruitment of the African American male to increase representation in K-12 rural schools.

Mr. Williams shared how he encouraged his students to attend a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and major in education. He shared,

> And, and I said, before, a lot of time at HBCU, depending on the making of your school,
> they're not going to be told about HBCU a lot. Nothing against the others, but sometimes,
> when iron sharpens iron, I'm the one that would tell them, "Look here, man, you need to
> go into education. There's a lot of money. There's a lot of grants. Man, the sky is the

limit, man. You get with the right school. Do what you need to do. Keep your nose clean, and you can keep it moving."

He continued by reflecting on the importance of sharing personal narratives of success in education and starting early in recruitment efforts. He shared,

We've got to tell our own story. Um, and I don't know how many guys over the years I've told about going into education, and they think, you know, like this. I mean, a small mind. But I have to let them know you don't also have to start on a high-school level. Start on an elementary level. You know, just start somewhere, or go out and get your degree, and don't stop there. Go and get your master's and go on to the collegiate level.

Mr. Williams stresses the importance of sharing our lived experiences and the varied levels of opportunities found in education from the elementary level to the college level. Early exposure is critical toward the recruitment of the African American boy towards education including future principal preparation programs.

Mr. Ray shared the need for target recruitment to increase the number of African American males in school leadership. He shared,

"Um, I don't think that school districts probably target that demographic. So probably if we, if school districts could come up with some type of creative way to recruit that population that may help."

Mr. Ray's reflections show the need for creative targeted recruitment to increase the number of African American males into the field of education and the need for districts to change their current recruitment strategies.

Mr. Kirkpatrick equally shared the importance of targeted, intentional recruitment of African American males early in school. He shared,

> You have to be intentional about recruiting Black males when they're in high school or
>
> middle school and start preparing them, uh, give them an incentive to want to do it. And
>
> even if they, they go in thinking, well, this is not going to be my career path, but I'm just
>
> going to do it for these 4 years and get my college paid for 2 years of my, it may, it may
>
> hook.

Mr. Kirkpatrick believes that early awareness and understanding the benefits of being in education may assist in recruiting African American males.

In closing, Mr. Kirkpatrick also shared an example of how targeted recruitment has helped hire former students within his district. He shared,

> So, when I was at [School name], we had a teacher prep program, but it was through
>
> CTE. And I never had more than 8 or 10 kids in there. And every year they wanted me to
>
> get rid of that course. Because it took up two blocks that one teacher could teach 56
>
> students if I put them in another class. But I believe the return that we got from having
>
> that class in place was invaluable. And the truth is actually 2 years ago, we hired like five
>
> students who had graduated from [School Name] who had been a part of that program as
>
> teachers. And they are still in the district right now. So that, that one, that right there is, is
>
> enough for me to know it, it works.

Addressing Negative Perceptions of the African American Male

A few of the study participants shared about the negative perceptions that African American males encounter in education. Mr. Williams shared his frustrations when the education system uses our Black boys solely for athletic and entertainment purposes. However, this system fails to monitor grades, thus not preparing Black boys for employment or postsecondary access. He shared,

So I get up – I get upset when these Black kids on a high school level, and the college level, get used, and then kicked to the side. Or the grades are not monitored, so they can't get into college. Or they get into college, the grades are not monitored again, and they don't graduate. So they go back to what they used to do – doing, whether it's just hitting the streets, or working a five-to-nine job, or, you know, hate to say it, um, going back to, um, slinging drugs or gang banging. And then what happens? You have kids. They grow up, and you angry at the world, and you don't push education on them. So that cycle kind of goes over and over.

Mr. Williams recognized how African American students can be used for their talents and then dismissed without a clear pathway towards their future. If African American boys are athletic but fail in their academics, it can potentially be detrimental toward their future ambition, thus creating a cycle of societal issues, including poverty.

Mr. Kirkpatrick shared about having diversity and equity dialogue sessions where all parties have a voice and role in these discussions' successes.

The other is, is putting in, um, um, diversity programs, um, to actually, um, talk about diversity and equity issues, um, throughout the district. Um, having those courageous conversations, um, making students are part of those, um, those forums where you have that dialogue, um, and you don't want those, those, um, opportunities for dialogue to be blaming sessions, uh, because everybody at the table has skin in the game. And everybody at the table should come willing to be a listener because everybody has a perspective. Everybody has a perspective, whether I agree with it or not, everybody has a perspective. And, um, so I think opportunities for dialogue about issues of equity and

race and racism, um, should be made available for students, made available for teachers,

parents, communities, um, having those equity, uh, programs in place, I think are crucial.

Mr. Kirkpatrick's suggestion was to create safe spaces for dialogue centered around discussing

diversity and equity issues in education. Everyone involved should share their point of view

regarding race and racism from the perspective of students, teachers, and their rural

communities.

Discussion

More Opportunities for future African American Male School Leaders

The study participants believed the lack of awareness of opportunities was directly

related to our African American boy's failure to see men in school leadership roles who look like

them. As research has indicated, "the teaching force in NC remains over 80% White and

interestingly nonrepresentative of our student population" (Public School Forum, 2019, p. 8).

The study participants recognized this lack of role modeling and ensuring African American

boys see the representation of themselves in their rural schools. The study participants believed

another reason for the underrepresentation of African American males is money. According to

the study participants, the concern for financial stability is preventing African American males

from selecting careers in education. There are numerous attacks on the African American boys,

including the War on Drugs, Zero Tolerance Policies, negative perceptions, dual existence, high

suspension, and the school-to-prison pipeline. The research supported the need for the African

American male's desire to have the financial stability to support their families. Therefore,

pursuing other careers is appealing for financial gains typically not associated within education

(Wallace & Gagen, 2019). There is a need to create an awareness of opportunities in the field of

education; however, the study participants also believe that financial stability was critical in the

reasons for the current dilemma. The starting point of allowing African American males to take on more leadership roles is by first increasing the availability of them in the education profession. Creating, sustaining, and funding programs that specifically recruit African American male educators and developing a pipeline that will allow them to traverse the path to teacher leaders and school leaders. Changing the perception of African American males in schools will happen when more African American males are in the classrooms as teachers, and debunk the myths that are portrayed as disciplinarians first and educators second. Additionally, training teachers to identify young black males beginning as early as grade 3 for teacher education programs, thus increasing the probability of the number going into the profession.

Principal Preparation Programs

Another avenue to create more opportunities for African American male future school leaders is by addressing Principal Preparation Programs. Principal Preparation Programs must first understand the importance of developing culturally responsive school leaders. Madhlangob and Gordon (2012) identified six themes for culturally responsive school leadership including: caring, building relationships, being persistent and persuasive, being present and communicating, modeling cultural responsiveness and fostering cultural responsiveness in others. Khalifa, Gooden and Davis (2016) identified four pillars of culturally responsive school leadership as: critical self-reflection, development of culturally responsive faculty and staff, promoting culturally responsive school environments and instruction and community engagement. Culturally responsive school leadership can be done by targeting coursework and/or alignment of courses with the culturally diverse needs of our society and schools. First creating courses that require reflection of implicit bias future leaders may have and having them critically self-reflect as an ongoing basis. This will allow for the process of individual change to

begin and systemic change to diminish its vice grip on our schools, by creating school leaders who are both self-aware and knowledgeable of the diverse needs of our schools and their constituents. In turn districts can invest in implementing critical self-reflection and implicit bias awareness training to current school leaders to support in the professional growth of current leadership, who may not have had a focus on culturally responsive leadership. This professional learning requires not just one training but an intentional ongoing focus on demystifying stereotypical thoughts of people from diverse backgrounds.

Creative Targeted Recruitment

Ladson Billings's (2011) article addressed how African American boys' childhood is being erased through manhood perceptions. Our society celebrates African American boys for their musical and athletic abilities but are unrecognized for their academics and intellectual curiosity. The study participants equally associated their beliefs centered around the lack of targeted African American males' recruitment toward education. As Hozien (2016) noted, another reality for African American males is that "once minority group members have their credentials, they face discrimination in employment practices, culturally discontinuous school climates and taboos about raising issues of racism, lack of promotion and failure of others to recognize their leadership skills" (p. 2). The study participants did recognize the need to address these negative societal perceptions of the African American male. Through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion forums, celebrating all student abilities beyond athletics and music, and sharing more lived experiences through targeted, creative recruitment efforts and a focus on recruitment from Historically Black College and Universities (HBCU's), more African American males may consider the field of education and school principal preparation programs.

Conclusion

African American male educators are gradually becoming an extinct population within the field of education. Sadly, this talented population offers our diverse student population with cultural wealth, historical knowledge, and a series of experiences to enrich any classroom and school community. Our challenge has a three-fold purpose inclusive of creating more opportunities for future African American males, redesigning Principal Preparation Programs and early exposure through intentional creative target recruitment efforts. From a historical perspective, the African American Principal was considered the leader in the Black community. As Walker (2000) noted, they were the bridge between the school and the community partners, parents, and stakeholders. They served as visionaries, innovators, advocates, speakers, professional development leaders, fundraisers, and even role models to African American children. They built schools, designed Sunday learning environments, and collaborated to advance higher education opportunities. We need more of these male leaders inside of the classroom, serving as school leaders and impacting policies and injustice practices for the African American boy to become future school leaders.

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