

Fall 2021

#BlackFemaleTeachersMatter: The Experiences of Three African American Female Teachers Who Left the Classroom During Their Induction Years

Ashlye Victoria Wilkerson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>



Part of the [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wilkerson, A. V.(2021). *#BlackFemaleTeachersMatter: The Experiences of Three African American Female Teachers Who Left the Classroom During Their Induction Years*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/6856>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

#BLACKFEMALETEACHERSMATTER: THE EXPERIENCES OF THREE
AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE TEACHERS WHO LEFT THE CLASSROOM
DURING THEIR INDUCTION YEARS

By:

Ashlye Victoria Wilkerson

Bachelor of Science
Winthrop University, 2005

Master of Arts of Teaching
Hampton University, 2007

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Teaching and Learning

College of Education

University of South Carolina

2021

Accepted by:

Gloria Boutte, Major Professor

Allison D. Anders, Committee Member

Michelle Martin, Committee Member

Toni Williams, Committee Member

Tracey L. Weldon, Interim Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

© Copyright by Ashlye Victoria Wilkerson, 2021
All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

To my mother who always affirmed me that I could achieve my highest dreams and goals. I believed it. You led the way in your family by being the first to earn a collegiate degree and chartered a new path for so many to follow. I completed your legacy as the first one in the family to earn a Ph.D. Thank you for your leadership, guidance, vision, and encouragement. I love you!

The title of Daddy's Girl is an affectionate term that I have always adored. I am grateful to have two dads in my life. To my biological father Johnny, thank you for helping to give me life. To my dad Tony, thank you for raising me to be the woman I am today. I love and appreciate you both!

To my husband, Kobie, you never allowed me to stay in the place of doubt or defeat during this journey, and for that, I am forever grateful. I truly appreciate your continued encouragement, support, and love. I love you!

To my daughters, Alana and Ariaah, you two are my why. Those early mornings, long days, and late nights of researching and completing homework assignments while juggling the responsibilities of family and work was not easy, but necessary, so that you two will always know that it can be done. You can achieve at the highest level of your dreams. Always believe it! I love both of you dearly.

To my fur baby, Kreasy, thank you for comforting me throughout this entire journey. You have been a constant in my life for fourteen years. Your cuddles, company, and companionship will always be cherished. I love you!

To my loving ancestors- Geneva McElveen (maternal grandmother), Robert McElveen (maternal grandfather), and Enoch Geddis (paternal grandfather), thank you for your love and guidance from Heaven. I love and miss you all dearly.

In loving memory of Ms. Dianna D. Friday and Mrs. Gracie House- thank you for pouring into me from the tender age of three years old. I am forever grateful for the early learning foundation I received in your care and for your unwavering support from my childhood until you left this earth. I love you both.

In loving memory of Angel Malave, Uncle Bruh, Aunt Pam, Uncle Jumbo, Uncle Tucka, Jonathan Boutte, Grandma Christine, Grandpa Campbell, Grandpa Lovell, Daddy Lovell, Donald Gist (Brother), Reverend Douglass E. Franklin, and DeOnna Britt. May you all continue to rest in peace and power.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am thankful to God from whom all my blessings flow. To my parents, thank you for instilling in me the spirit of excellence and nurturing it throughout my life. Thanks for assisting me as I transitioned into motherhood. I appreciate you all giving me the support I needed with the girls that allowed me to continue to pursue my goals and dreams. To my in-loves, thanks for being an amazing village for my family and me. To Kobie, Alana, and Ariaah, thanks for keeping me going. I love you all the absolute most!

To the matriarchs of the family- thank you Grandmother Frances (95) and Grandmother Lizzie (90) for your love, support, and elegant examples of grace. I love you both.

To the teachers and mentors along my educational journey from Saint John Preschool, H.B. Rhame Elementary School, Saint Andrews Middle School, Columbia High School, Winthrop University, Hampton University, and the University of South Carolina, thank you for guiding my steps and pouring into me as a lifelong learner.

To Mrs. Betty H. Jenkins, whom I affectionally refer to as Momma J, thank you so much for impacting my life as a third-grade student and inspiring me to enter the field of education. I have gained so many experiences and opportunities as a result. Most importantly, I have had the honor of playing a small role in the teaching and learning process for so many children, parents, families, teachers, schools, districts, states, and in other countries. For that, I am eternally grateful!

To my village, family, and friends, thanks for staying in my corner, providing a listening ear, supporting my dreams, keeping me encouraged, and assisting with the care of the girls during this process. I appreciate and love each of you!

Special thanks to my doctoral committee for seeing me to the finish line. This journey has been a long one, but you all remained dedicated to my growth and development. I appreciate your guidance, expertise, and commitment to my completion. Thank you to my major advisor Dr. Gloria Swindler and committee members Dr. Allison D. Anders, Dr. Michelle Martin, and Dr. Toni Williams.

ABSTRACT

This study captured the lived experiences of three African American, female classroom teachers who left the profession within three years of beginning their careers. The main goal that led this research was to center the perspectives of African American women in the conversation about teacher retention, turnover, and attrition percentages that plague the field of education. The primary questions that guided this study were: (1) “What can be learned from the life stories of former African American female teachers who left the teaching profession from South Carolina public classrooms during their induction years?”, (2) “What do their life stories reveal about the role of gender and race in their educational histories and their experiences in the teaching profession?”, and (3) “What motivators do former African American female teacher participants identify in their decision to leave the classroom within their first five years?”

Data sources for this study included in-depth individual interviews. Data representation and analysis was informed by a life story approach which is commonly used in studies pertaining to educational phenomena (Tagg, 1985). The researcher created three personal-professional narratives of each participant, highlighting commonalities of experience, contrast of experience, and connections to extant literature.

Results from this study may be useful for informing: (1) teacher preparation in colleges of education; (2) recruitment and retention efforts for African American female

teachers; and (3) support and teacher autonomy from school and district administration and leaders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract.....	vii
List of Tables	x
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature	21
Chapter 3: Methodology	45
Chapter 4: Findings.....	58
Chapter 5: Discussion	95
References.....	112
Appendix A- Participant Flyer.....	127
Appendix B- Interview Questions	128
Appendix C- Participant Interview Schedule	132
Appendix D- South Carolina Teachers by Race and Gender	133

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. The Impact of the Brown vs Board of Education Ruling on the Displacement of African American Teachers	28
Table 2.2 Intersectionality Considerations for Life Stories	43
Table 3.1 Participant Demographic Background.....	49
Table 4.1 Participant Experiences with Intersectionality	77
Table 4.2. Motivating Factors to Classroom Departure.....	80

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hashtag activism, #activism, is widely used on social media to document and challenge injustices and mistreatment such as disproportionate deaths of unarmed Black and Brown citizens by police officers (Stache, 2015), and is successful in conveying messages and spearheading movements (Yang, 2016). *#BlackLivesMatter* encompasses a widely known (and highly debated) hashtag, phrase, and movement that promotes the commitment of activists and communities devoted to rejecting post-racial ideologies. *#BlackLivesMatter* (BLM) activists are committed to challenging laws, policies, behaviors, and attitudes that ultimately devalue Black lives both historically and in contemporary times with the overall purpose of uplifting Black people. The hashtag symbol (#) is often used as a way of marking a conversation and/or placing emphasis on a topic while simultaneously allowing followers to quickly retrieve information and frame the true meaning of the subject (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). It allows the conversation to continue beyond social media and take place between social contexts, political scenes, public events and developments, and potentially serves as a beneficial method for increasing awareness (Stache, 2015). According to Bonilla & Rosa (2015), the use of this icon (#) collects and gathers individual experiences, practices and social aspects of communities.

Millions of people have joined the BLM movement to proclaim that Black lives matter (lives of Black and Brown people from all places and backgrounds) and to reassert the legitimacy of African American citizens (Vickery, 2017). Specifically, the *#BlackLivesMatter* movement focuses on the plight and struggles Black boys and men face (Mayorga & Picower, 2017; Patton, Crenshaw, & Watson, 2006) pertaining to police brutality, societal mistreatment, sexual orientation discrimination, and other key issues. Currently, BLM has now broadened the discussion around state violence and ways in which Black people are deprived of human rights and dignity (Mayorga & Picower, 2017). Winn (2010) argues that the focus of BLM is primarily on Black boys and men due to this group having the highest number of incarcerations and arrests in the United States. The practice of focusing on boys and men also holds true within educational research, where most topics studied with regard to African Americans fail to capture the experiences of women and girls, causing them to be marginalized, invisible, and silenced (Love, 2014; Patton, Crenshaw, & Watson, 2006; Morris, 2016; Williams & Evans-Winters, 2005; Winn, 2010). Additionally, in connection to the field of education, there is an all-time shortage and low representation of Black female teachers in the United States public school system (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Farinde, Allen & Lewis, 2016; Gist, 2018). Indeed, Black female teachers are leaving the profession in higher numbers than any group (Mosely, 2018; Will, 2016), and within the first five years of entering the field (Jackson & Kohli, 2016). More generally, teachers of Color are exiting the profession at a 24 percent higher rate than their White counterparts (Jackson & Kohli, 2016; Madeline, 2016).

Of those who are employed in the profession, teachers of Color represent 14 percent of the teaching force, with more than 40 percent of schools not having one teacher of Color on staff (Jackson & Kohli, 2016; Mosely, 2018). During the 2017-2018 school year, seven percent of the teacher population in the United States were of Color (NCES, 2020). This low representation of African American teachers and teachers of Color overall is problematic in that it causes students, in most cases, to experience a primarily White teaching population (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010). Having a predominantly White teaching population poses an issue of students not having cultural representation or being misunderstood by those in authority due to cultural differences (Grissom and Redding, 2016). According to Williams and Evans-Winters (2005), students of Color often experience embarrassment in the classroom, covert and overt racism, and gender bias by their White teachers. Scholars have identified the need for the recruitment and retention of Black teachers in public schools to improve academic performances, cultural representation, and social experiences of all students (Milner, 2006a; Mosely, 2018).

Though recruitment and retention of teachers of Color, both African Americans and teachers from other non-White backgrounds, is widely discussed in educational circles, there is limited research on teachers of Color, and a need for more critical research that bring their narratives and experiences to the forefront of contemporary discussions about retention strategies (Jackson & Kohli, 2016). This study sought to illuminate the teaching experiences of Black teachers. The title of this study places emphasis on *Black female teachers* by centering their experiences with the use of a hashtag (#BlackFemaleTeachersMatter) that is not currently used on social media

platforms. At the study's conclusion, I plan to share pertinent findings using this hashtag to further conversations about Black female teachers' recruitment and retention.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

In this study, the goal was to contribute to the academic literature by providing descriptions of the life and work experiences of African American women in their own words, as well as shed light on the experiences contributing to African American female teachers leaving the teaching profession. Though their experiences offer lessons from their particular encounters they faced as African American female teachers, it does not explain or serve to generalize what African American or Black women overall faces during their teaching experiences in public P-12 schools in the United States. This research examined the growing issue of high teacher turnover among African American women in the profession, specifically in South Carolina.

In this study, I examined why African American female teachers left the classroom within three to five years because research indicates women make up 76.6 percent of the teaching population (NCES, 2017) but African American women leave at higher rates than their White counterparts and that many leave within the first five years of being in the profession (Jackson & Kohli, 2016; Will, 2016). This study sought to elevate the voices of Black women teachers whose voices have seldom been a part of academic research by giving value to their perspectives and experiences.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The majority of previous studies conducted about teacher turnover, recruitment, and retention have focused heavily on general reasons for the decline in the profession and annual occurrences of teachers leaving versus those who leave during the school year

(Darling-Hammond, 1997; Redding & Henry, 2019). Very few researchers have explored how African American women are impacted by treatment and practices in the education system (Foster, 1997; Jackson & Kohli, 2016). Additionally, very few researchers have captured the experiences of African American women in their own voices (Griffin & Tackie, 2016; Jackson & Kohli, 2016). This void in the literature normalizes the voices and experiences of the dominant culture which is problematic for teachers of Color. Hence, this research study attempted to fill this gap by exploring how and why African American women are leaving the classroom profession (Jackson & Kohli, 2016).

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is important to administrators, policy makers, and educators who are interested in addressing the inadequate representation of African American women teachers in the classroom. In my research, I: (1) reviewed literature on historical and policy implications that have contributed to the decline of the African American female teacher demographic; and (2) represented in Life Story the experiences of African American female teachers who taught in the South Carolina public school system and decided to leave within a five-year time period.

Decline of African American Teachers

African American teachers have been shown to play a critical role in the academic success of students (Milner, 2006a; Mosely, 2018), however, the turnover rate among African Americans is highest among any subgroup of teachers in the United States (U.S.) (NCES, 2014; NCES, 2016; Yesil Dagli, 2012). According to the NCES (2014), African American teachers left the profession at a higher percentage than White teachers. Teachers who taught three years or less left the profession at a higher percentage than

those teaching four years or more. In the NCES study, the highest documented percentage was 11.4 percent of teachers leaving with one year or less experience. This percentage is higher for the state of South Carolina during the 2019-2020 academic year, as 22 percent of the teachers did not return to the field of education, with 35 percent of them having five years or less experience and 12 percent having only one year or less experience (South Carolina Annual Educator Supply and Demand Report, 2019). Foster (1997) noted that in 1950, most of the teachers in U.S. classrooms were White, middle class, middle aged, and of Protestant backgrounds. Similar demographic backgrounds make up most of the teaching population in the United States today. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that 76.6 percent of teachers among all public schools are female and 80.1 percent of teachers in public schools are White (NCES, 2017). The table in Appendix A illustrates a decline of African American teachers in 2009-2010 the state of South Carolina followed by a gradual increase each year over the past decade. This population recently returned to the number of 50,867 teachers which is just 1,537 thousand more teachers that were employed in the state nearly ten years ago even though the number of school aged children has increased in the same period of time.

Research Questions

This study aimed to identify the motivation for African American women teachers to leave the classroom, particularly within their induction period defined as the first five years in the profession. This study addressed five research questions:

- 1-What can be learned from the life stories of former African American female teachers who left the teaching profession from South Carolina public classrooms during their induction years?

- 1a- What do their life stories reveal about the role of gender and race in their educational histories and their experiences in the teaching profession?
- 2- What motivators do former African American female teacher participants identify in their decision to leave the classroom within their first five years?
- 3- What recommendations do former African American female teachers suggest for decreasing teacher turnover among Black women?
- 4- What career paths do former African American female teachers pursue once leaving the classroom?

ASSUMPTIONS

This study is guided by three experiences that contribute to the decline of African American female teachers. Each is complex and multilayered. The three experiences identified through the research include: racial issues (Foster, 1997; Gist, 2018), historical decisions (Farinde-Wu, 2018; Foster, 1997; Gist, 2018), and personal educational experiences (Farinde-Wu, 2018).

How I Came to This Research

I am an African American woman who experienced success (positive academic and social outcomes for my students) during my three-year period as a kindergarten and first-grade classroom teacher in a public elementary school in South Carolina. The first two years were spent in a kindergarten setting and the last year was in a first-grade setting. Yet, like Dixson, James, and Frieson (2019), my interest in African American teacher burnout came about early in my career as I experienced dissatisfaction with some aspects of teaching. Later, as a doctoral student, I became familiar with literature on teacher turnover that focused on stress, working conditions, and pay (Hanushek, 2007) --

all of which I could identify with. Through researching for classes, I noticed that the literature was normed to White experiences with limited to no attention to situations that Black women may have experienced specifically.

Connections Between My Personal Story and Being a Teacher

My love for teaching goes back to my childhood, and my (perhaps naïve) expectation was to teach in a classroom for my entire professional career with the possibility of advancing to school leadership, principalship, or district leadership. Admittedly, I hope that this study will help me reflect on my premature exit from the teaching profession as well. Methodologically, I am aware of some of the potential challenges that I may have researching a topic so close to my life and will discuss this in the methodology section. I share my personal story to illustrate my childhood and college perspectives about teaching because they directly impacted my desire to enter the profession.

I fondly remember the day I declared I would be a classroom teacher. It was a weekday afternoon in 1991. I was a third-grade student enrolled in a public Elementary School in South Carolina. My normal routine would have me in the cafeteria for the after-school Young Male Christian Association (YMCA) program completing homework, playing games, and engaging in other activities with my classmates and peers. This day, my teacher noticed that I completed all my homework and asked if I would like to stay after school to help her in the classroom. After getting permission from my after school teacher, I was ecstatic at the thought of helping my favorite teacher (a title she still holds, even at this point in my educational journey). Not knowing what tasks she would have me to complete, I simply replied, “I don’t know” when friends asked what I would be

doing in the class instead of staying with them in the YMCA program. To this they responded by labeling me a “teacher’s pet” as I gathered my snack and belongings and returned to the classroom. I was accustomed to hearing this nickname given to me sarcastically by classmates after earning the titles of classroom helper, line leader and hall monitor. Because I often completed assignments early and had ‘great’ classroom behavior, I was also often asked to assist my teacher during class with running errands to the front office, picking up her lunch or other jobs that would further solidify my peers labeling me as the class favorite.

Upon entering the classroom, my teacher, who was an African American woman, said, “Ashlye, do you mind helping me with a few things today?” I eagerly replied, “No ma’am!” She first gave me the duty of cleaning the chalkboard. A minor task to most but an exciting job for me. I proceeded to clean the board that was covered with the neatest cursive handwriting I had ever seen—particularly because this was the first time I was exposed to cursive writing.

The afternoon quickly ended after I pushed in all the desks, gathered, and shelved the books, and placed stickers on my classmates’ writing sheets. As a reward, my teacher gave me a few of her outdated Teacher Edition textbooks, with the answer keys in the back. This was by far my most prized possession. I ran into my bedroom upon returning home and immediately began teaching my stuffed animals, teddy bears, and dolls using my brand-new (to me) teacher textbook. That day, I officially began my pursuit of becoming a classroom teacher. My one-on-one time with my third-grade teacher occurred every Thursday afternoon for the rest of that year and solidified my love for her and the

profession. From that point on, I took every chance I had to practice my craft and hone my skillset.

For example, I served as a classroom reading buddy, peer mentor, school tutor, daycare volunteer, and other roles that allowed me the opportunity to work with children and peers in teaching and learning capacities. While in ninth grade, I desperately wanted a summer job. After completing a summer internship with the Columbia Urban League and another as a class assistant at my early childhood alma mater, I still was not old enough to gain summer employment. As an entrepreneur, my mother encouraged me to create my own business. I reflected on my involvement with my third-grade teacher and took my mother's advice to start *Ashlye's Summer Enrichment Program*. I modeled my summer program on knowledge gained from my third-grade teacher's classroom, volunteering at my pre-school alma mater, and being a member of the Teacher Cadet program. The success of this program cemented my professional career choice as an Early Childhood Educator and Entrepreneur.

I wrote letters to my parents' friends informing them of my new business venture and requested that they consider enrolling their child or grandchild in my academy. The summer program was six weeks long; five days a week; covered all subjects; provided breakfast, lunch, and snack; and included weekly field trips (where my parents served as the driver, cook, and field-trip chaperones). *Ashlye's Summer Enrichment Program* began the summer of my ninth-grade year with three students in my parents' living room and grew over the next three years to 15 students and five volunteer staff members, held in the fellowship hall and Sunday school classrooms of my church. The program was lauded

by parents, supported, and sponsored by local business owners, and featured in the local newspaper.

When selecting an institution to begin my higher education journey, I took great pride in enrolling at a small, local regional college, recognized for its outstanding work in the field of education and being coined as the “Teaching College” for the state of South Carolina. This university was a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) known for producing most of the teacher force in the state. As a student enrolled in Child Psychology with a dual minor in Early Childhood Education and Entrepreneurship, I began pedagogical content courses the second semester of my freshman year. I chose this combination of study because I too believed a successful teacher should possess the characteristics of a love for children, knowledge of child psychology, understanding of pedagogical content, and deep subject matter knowledge (Hanushek, 2007). At the time, though not able to fully communicate the missing component in my teacher preparation program, I began to feel a disconnect between theory and practice. While I still held the teaching profession in high esteem and enjoyed my teacher preparation program, it appeared that the lessons gained in my college courses did not consistently reflect the experiences I had during field placement. Due to my limited knowledge of policy and practice at the time, I gathered that the disconnect stemmed from the age of the professors (ranging between early fifties to late sixties) and the differences with the new generation of the elementary school-aged children-

After graduating with my undergraduate degree and enrolling as a graduate student at a small, regional Historically Black University (HBCU) in Virginia, I realized what was missing from my previous college curriculum: coursework that reflected the

needs of African American and other students of Color. Though the instructional practices and strategies from my undergraduate program reflected recent research findings deemed as ‘best practices’, very little addressed the cultural needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds or students of Color.

After graduating from my Master’s program, I was faced with choosing where I would accept my first teaching position. My options included remaining in Virginia and accepting the offer to stay in the district where I completed my most recent internship experience in a public magnet school or returning to my home city and state. Knowing that I wanted to give back to my community that gave so much to me, I decided not to accept the offer in Virginia. Once home, I had to choose between two schools in two different districts. Both districts had deep history of ‘White flight’--White parents fleeing cities looking for higher performing districts in the suburbs (O’Brine & Kritsonis, 2008). Most of the White parents fled from the first district to start the second district because of the growing African American population in the first district. In the case of my hometown, this left many Black students (a large percentage of whom were from lower socioeconomic statuses) in the city schools. As a young, impressionable new hire, I was enticed to work in the newer school district that had the best salary structure, sign-on and relocation bonuses, newly constructed school buildings, and was the closest proximity to my new home. Mentors, family members, and other professionals weighed in on this tough decision, overwhelmingly supporting this district as the best choice for my first teaching position. After long deliberation, I decided against the recommendation of most and stayed true to my guiding principle of giving back to the community that raised me. I

eagerly accepted my dream job as a Kindergarten teacher in the school district where I graduated from.

My first assignment after gaining employment was at a Title I elementary school located in the heart of downtown city limits near the area where I grew up as a child. From my recollection of the school's demographics, the student population included 97 percent Black and three percent other. Additionally, 90 percent were below the poverty line, qualifying for free or reduced lunch programs. In most cases, the math and reading scores of our student population were daunting, identifying most of our students reading below grade level according to the district-based math and research-based literacy reading assessments. The latter assessment was normed to White students (Dominie Reading and Writing Assessment) and deemed problematic in our school by academic researchers and administrators due to the high African American student population.

In my role as a teacher, I was eager to reach each student and make gains with their academic achievement. While working with my students to address their needs in my data-driven instructional practices, I used African American-based children's literature to connect to them as readers. I stayed late and worked overtime to develop games, center time activities, and resources. For the students enrolled in their first formal learning experience and/or testing lower than others, I designed center time activities to have an instructional lesson from me as well as a review lesson from my assistant to maximize their contact hours with teachers. Additionally, I assigned a student from this group to stay behind with me while my assistant took the class to the restroom, lunch time, and/or recess to give them additional time to review content, read a favorite book, or practice a new skill. Because I experienced success, the district's Title I and Early

Childhood offices requested to observe a lesson in my classroom. After their observations, they noted my students' zeal for learning and documented their experiences of achievement. As a result, they video recorded my classroom and aired the segment on the school district's television channel for teachers, parents, and everyone within the district to view. I was also asked to present the same lesson and small group mini lesson in a series of eight workshops throughout the district to each pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teacher.

Sadly, that excitement and pride that accompanied these accolades were not strong enough to keep me in the profession that I loved since I was a young child. Retrospectively, a key factor in my choice to leave, congruent with the research (Jackson & Kohli, 2016), was that I was not adequately prepared for the differences I would encounter between my college internship/field placements and my teaching position pertaining to the culture, climate, and overall conditions of the field. While some researchers have suggested that the challenges stemmed solely from teaching in an urban, high poverty, majority African American school, others believe these are stereotypical cover-ups (Jacob, 2007). Far more challenges and disparities escape notice.

The first challenge I recall was the high level of responsibility. In most cases, teachers seemed to welcome responsibility that was warranted with teaching "x" number of children during the academic year. However, other demanding tasks such as submitting daily, weekly, monthly, and annual long-range lesson plans requires teachers to plan out every aspect of the school day and year down to the minute, factoring in anticipatory sets, assessments, individualized differentiation of instruction, small group lessons, whole group lessons, and transition activities. Annual plans had to be turned in at

the beginning of the year, and more detailed versions had to be submitted for each day on a weekly basis. The required paperwork took a lot of time from teaching and reduced the amount of enjoyment during the process (Abel & Sewell, 2010).

The second challenge involved the school being designated a *Reading First* school in addition to the Title I status. This meant that in addition to the regular paperwork, mandates were required by the district's area superintendent, Title I department, Early Childhood department, as well as the South Carolina State Superintendent of Education office. On any given day, we were being observed and evaluated by district and/or state-level consultants to ensure that we were meeting policies and procedures. Additionally, each level of scrutiny yielded additional conferences, meetings, planning sessions, and evaluations/forms to complete, increasing the level of work exponentially.

The third challenge was combatting the deficit thinking and toxic culture within the school. From the top down, there were many people doubting the abilities of students and capabilities of teachers. We were constantly presented with what the students could not do and what we as teachers needed to do a better job of to address their shortcoming. These formal and informal expectations and values shaped how the teachers and staff thought, felt, and treated students. When support is lacking, reforms will falter, morale and commitment withers, and student learning slips as a byproduct (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Moreover, the toxic culture arising from deficit mindsets in the school was bolstered by a lack of administrative support. This prompted the fourth challenge, non-congeniality among faculty and staff—which I believe was influenced by the endemic comparisons of teachers' outcomes. Peterson & Deal (1998) stated that disgruntled staff

criticize teachers who are concerned about student achievement, attack new ideas, and make fun of teachers and staff who seek to advance and learn new strategies through attending conferences, workshops, and additional professional development opportunities.

Prior to beginning my teaching career in South Carolina, I completed my teaching internship experiences in Virginia. In the school district where I was assigned, students were dismissed half-day every Wednesday to allow teachers to co-plan with their grade-level teams. This setting encouraged teacher collaboration and provided the resources and opportunity to fully engage in this model. During my career placement, my colleagues did not engage in collaborative planning unless required by the principal or district during scheduled grade-group meetings. Additionally, it was uncommon to share lessons and strategies out of fear of one teacher outperforming the other.

The fifth challenge was student behavior, which contributes to twenty-five percent of teachers leaving before their third year and forty percent leaving within the first five years (Chang, 2009; Chang & Davis, 2009). Though typical to speak with a five and six-year-old about talking too much in class, following class procedures, cleaning up their centers, and sharing with their classmates, the behavioral incidents I encountered daily far exceeded the anticipated behaviors I thought I would have to address. The stresses that accompanied putting on a firm demeanor took a toll on me and caused emotional exhaustion.

For example, some classroom behaviors exhibited by my students were further exacerbated by difficulties the students experienced in their homes. These difficulties included factors such as extreme poverty, hunger, homelessness, parents who were

incarcerated, and separation of parents. Facing these harsh realities was troubling for me because up until then, I was primarily shielded from such challenges. It was at this time I was forced to confront the privileges I had grown comfortable with in my personal life. I also had to accept the fact that my teacher preparation programs, and personal life experiences, did not prepare me to handle most of the daily challenges within the confines of my classroom.

The five aforementioned factors ultimately contributed to my decision to leave the classroom and have been identified by many other African American teachers who either left or are contemplating leaving as well (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Foster, 1997; Redding & Henry, 2019). Reflecting on those factors, I had to reconcile my purpose in life with the career I prepared for my entire life. I ultimately made the decision to leave the classroom and continue my passion for educating, equipping, and empowering both children and adults, which allowed me to operate holistically (Boutte, Johnson, Wynter-Hoyte, & Uyoata, 2017). Once reconciled, I realized my joy for engaging with community and service. I hope to serve as a bridge-builder and change agent in local organizations, inspire children on a broader scale to learn and read through the use of children's books that I authored, serve in capacities that allows me to nurture and operate in my policy and political leadership interests, and further engage in educational entrepreneurship endeavors.

My wish for Black female teachers is threefold: (1) receive the appropriate training and content knowledge to prepare them for the profession and the meaningful work they will embark upon in the world of teaching. In this, I hope they are also prepared for the level of social action required to challenge the status quo and educate the

most underserved student population—African American students (Boutte, 2016); (2) receive the support they need while in the profession. In this, I hope they are engaging in meaningful connections with their peers and receive the resources from their school and district level leaders to flourish in the profession and leave an impact on the students they teach; and (3) to honor their goals and aspirations and pursue their dreams if they choose to leave the classroom. In this, I hope they can identify a new profession that allows them to transfer or further develop their skillset acquired as a teacher. I believe if each of these are attained based on the level the teacher is on, their overall fulfillment in their abilities and lives will be enhanced. They will be better positioned to contribute to society through the impact they will have on their students and the communities they serve. The in-depth training in preparation to enter the profession will better equip them to connect operate in the field alongside their peers in the field. They will also be able to honor themselves knowing how they contribute to the overall picture of educating our youth in our nation. They will be more aware of historical antecedents that illustrates and documents the need for their involvement in the lives of students, especially their unique ability to serve as a neutralizer for students of color. Additionally, their overall life will be enhanced. This will be evident in their improved professional relationships, sense of self-worth and confidence in their abilities to perform at high levels in their field, and their overall enjoyment in their day-to-day routines in the classroom.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

The following terms will guide the use of terminology as it is used in this dissertation.

Black Education is defined along two dimensions: (1) systematic efforts to teach Black children in the United States, focusing particularly on the public sector, and (2), the quality of education as it relates to cultural responsiveness in the classroom and community political empowerment among Black communities (Lee, 2005).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is a teaching approach that uses students' cultures to help them accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture and challenge inequities that schools and other institutions perpetuate (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; 2009).

Effective teachers defined as those who are skilled at raising the achievement levels of their students (Murnane & Steele, 2007), and who seek to develop students' cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Induction years is defined as a phase in learning to teach, a process of enculturation, and a program of support for new teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

Hashtag Ethnography is an analytical frame that combines approaches from linguistic anthropology and social movements research to investigate the semiotics of digital protests (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015).

Meritocracy is defined as the belief that achievement is dependent on one's own abilities, efforts, and skills (Lazar & Sharma, 2016).

Teacher shortage is defined as the gap between the number of qualified teachers needed in the nation's K-12 schools and the number available for hire each year (Garcia, E. & Weiss, E., 2019).

Teacher turnover is defined as major changes from one school year to the next in a teacher's assignment. Three components are included in this broad term: (1) teacher

attrition—leaving teacher employment; (2) teacher migration—moving to a different school, and (3) area transfer—moving from one assignment, such as special education, to another, such as general education (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland 2008).

Teacher voice defined as teachers' explaining their experiences in their own words (Griffin & Tackie, 2016).

CHAPTER 2

OUTLINE

Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTE) forms the conceptual orientation for this study. CRTE is inspired by Critical Race Theory (CRT), which seeks to explain the historical underpinning and implications of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the racial inequities in the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Critical Race Theory emerged from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) which examined the ways the law reproduced the status quo in U.S. society (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Critical Race Theory was an intellectual movement was initiated by progressive law scholars, primarily of legal scholars of Color, who viewed the law as an institution that sustained White supremacy. One purpose of CRT is to address the discrepancies in policies grounded in racial discrimination (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to the education field.

Critical Race Theory informed my exploration of the intersection of race and gender in the disproportionate and inadequate representation of African American female teachers in public classrooms. Focusing on Berry & Cook's (2019) intersectionality also allowed me to examine race and gender through the lens of power and oppression. Understanding that Black women's identities have often been socially constructed as marginalized in society and schools

guided me to probe the role that this particular intersection (Black and female gender) plays in schools, and how it may or may not contribute to leaving the teaching profession during the induction period. Using the construct of intersectional experience proved useful in thinking about the role that racism plays in the process of premature departure from the teaching profession. I believe that African American women teachers enhance the learning process for students, specifically African American students.

According to Jordan-Zachery (2007), the term intersectionality is defined as the analysis of differences and was originated on September 21, 1832 by Maria Stewart when she challenged the functioning of gender and race. Her speech, “Why Sit Ye Here and Die?”, was given during a meeting of the new England Anti-Slavery Society at Franklin Hall in Boston. Her work as an abolitionist generally attacked slavery, but in her address, she condemned the attitude that prohibited the occupational advancement of Black women due to the systematic denial of an education stating that the treatment received was only slightly better than that of those enslaved. The use of intersectionality is important because it provides a way to understand the positioning of Black women while also serving to liberate these women and their communities (Jordan-Zachery, 2007).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“All my life I had to fight!” This is a popular line by the character Sophia, played by Oprah Winfrey in the highly acclaimed movie *The Color Purple*, based on the book written by Alice Walker (1985). This statement holds true for African Americans and accurately reflects the persistent fight for equal educational opportunities within the

Black community. It is a sentiment that was also captured in the highly acclaimed award-winning civil rights series “Eyes on the Prize” (Hampton, 1986), which emphasized, “When we fight about education, we’re fighting for our lives” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 206). The civil rights era battle culminated in the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that “separate was not equal,” which was perceived as a critical step towards dismantling White supremacy and racial inequity (Warren, 1954). However, that vision was not realized as the aftermath of the verdict caused a widespread loss of Black teachers—primarily Black female teachers (Ross, K. M., Nasir, N. I. S., Givens, J. R., de Royston, M. M., Vakil, S., Madkins, T. C., & Philoxene, D., 2016). Since that time, the Black teaching force has declined significantly, and Black students have continued to not fare well in public schools (Milner & Howard, 2004). According to Hudson and Holmes (1994), the loss of African American teachers in public school settings has had a lasting negative impact on all students and the communities in which they reside, particularly African American students. The loss of diversity of thought and the ability to relate to students from various backgrounds is detrimental to the growth and development of all students (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014). Additionally, researchers assert that the implementation of the policies developed from *Brown v. Board of Education* resulted in the shrinking of the African American teacher pool (Hudson & Holmes, 1994).

The review of literature provides an historical account of the drastic decline of African American teachers. This section will also explore literature from multiple disciplines (e.g., case law, history, sociology, education, and anthropology) related to the complexities associated with race, gender and historical antecedents of the teaching

profession, which could influence why African American women choose to leave the classroom.

After the historical overview, the literature review represents the factors identified by teachers that contribute to high turnover and low retention rates among African American women teachers, underscoring the complexities and challenges involved between teacher preparation programs and career experiences; the unique experiences of African American teachers, as they are described in their own words; the ways African American female teachers can serve as the equalizer for the success of students in the American educational system. Additionally, the literature focused on the role African American teachers play in serving as gatekeepers of African American students, and the benefits of African American female teachers and the benefits for all students.

Historical Context for the Decline of African American Teachers

Historically in U.S. public schools, Black teachers were hired primarily to teach Black students (Butchart, 2007). Before the American Civil War (1861-1865), southern states passed legislation that banned African American slaves and free citizens from formal education and learning how to read or write. This legislation was enforced by slave patrols to maintain White racial superiority. If African Americans were caught learning, reading, or writing, they were often beaten or risked having their thumbs or fingers severed as punishment. Despite these challenges and harsh conditions, African Americans continued to fight for formal education. They demanded literacy, built schoolhouses, attended schools, and recruited teachers, most of whom were African Americans, to educate African American children (Butchart, 2007).

The mark of the 1940s is particularly important in the state of South Carolina. According to Baker (2011), racially and politically conscious African American teachers taught about a vision of equality that inspired student protest. Those teachers provided support and encouragement to students who participated in boycotts, organized demonstrations, and registered voters. Of the 63,697 Black teachers in the United States in 1940, a significant year for Black teachers entering the profession due to the courts beginning to interpret the concept of “equal” from *Plessy v Ferguson* (Siddle-Walker, 2001), 46,381 of those teachers were in the South (Foster, 1997). Two eligibility lists were used (one for Black teachers and another for White teachers) to create and maintain all-Black schools. The primary reason that Black teachers were prohibited from teaching White children was the widespread belief firmly ingrained since the 19th century that, like others of their race, Black teachers were inferior to Whites and not suitable to teach White students. Though Black teachers could only work in Black schools, White teachers could work in both Black and White schools. Many Black teachers, especially in larger cities, had more academic training and longer years of service in the public schools than White teachers, yet Black teachers were assigned substitute, provisional or temporary teaching roles (Foster, 1997).

Impact of Brown vs. Board of Education- Topeka, Kansas (1954)

With the passing of the *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*, the desegregation of schools meant the loss of jobs for Black teachers. *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954 was comprised of five cases, one of which originated in Clarendon County, South Carolina. The original case began in 1947 under the name *Briggs v. Elliott* as a transportation equality case (Dobrasko, 2018). After World War II, African Americans

began moving to the city from the farms to take advantage of the improved community (Dobrasko, 2018). Though conditions were better, there were still vast disparities in resources between them and the White community (Dobrasko, 2018). In 1947, African American parents noted the lack of resources in transportation and filed a suit against R.W. Elliott, who was the president of the school board for Clarendon County. The lawsuit sought to secure school buses for African American students as they were already provided to the White students. The suit ultimately failed, and bus transportation was not provided for African American students (Dobrasko, 2018).

In 1948, the value of Black schools in South Carolina was \$12.9 million compared to that of schools in the White community, which was valued at \$68.4 million (Dobrasko, 2018). Parents grew tired of poor school facilities, lack of transportation, and poor leadership in Black schools. After an unsuccessful attempt at achieving their demands, the Clarendon parents regrouped and secured the attention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Meanwhile in Topeka, Kansas in 1951, the family of Linda Brown complained to their local NAACP Chapter that their seven-year-old daughter was walking over a mile, often in freezing weather, to her Black segregated elementary school and was denied admission to the White elementary school that was located only four blocks away from their home (Gladwell, 2016; Milner & Howard, 2004; Warren, 1954). As a result, the *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* of Topeka, Kansas suit was filed to dismantle the injustices of the schooling of Black students, following other unsuccessful efforts such as the *Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)* Supreme Court case that ruled to uphold segregation. *Plessy v. Ferguson* successfully advanced the notion of “separate but equal,” which aided in the

Brown v. Board of Education hearing (Milner & Howard, 2004). This advancement in theory aided the NAACP when they decided to change the strategy of *Briggs v. Elliott* from focusing on buses to equalizing school facilities and education in the school district (Dobrasko, 2018).

The Supreme Court ruled that segregated sections of buses and schools were to be equal and that facilities and accommodations were to be equal to those of White students. However, the ruling was never carried out, causing second-class facilities and accommodations to be given to Black students (Milner & Howard, 2004). As a result, African Americans failed to get the results they envisioned, particularly pertaining to the African American teaching force (Hudson & Holmes, 1994). Dramatic decreases of African American teachers were the most alarming fallout of the landmark case (Milner & Howard, 2004).

Prior to the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*, Black students attended schools operated mostly by experienced, dedicated, concerned and skilled Black educators who had better credentials and were more familiar with the cultural context of their students (Milner & Howard, 2004).

Part of the problem with *Brown v. Board of Education* was the assumption that a school with an all-Black faculty did not provide an education equal to that by an all-White faculty (Foster 1997). As a result, Black teachers had their intellectual competence called into question, their positions were no longer secure, their livelihoods were threatened, and their morale was undermined. Matters grew worse for those Black teachers who were ‘fortunate’ enough to gain employment in a White school (Foster, 1997). African American educators were demoted, displaced, disrespected, and dismissed

from their careers as they had known them to be (Foster, 1997). With desegregation came enormous layoffs and demotions; approximately 38,000 African American teachers and administrators in 17 states lost their positions between 1945-1965 and increased difficulty in predicting the conditions of the remaining African American teachers (Foster, 1997; Milner & Howard, 2004). Those teachers did not know if they would be demoted in position, required to serve as a substitute or part-time teacher, or if they would be subjected to racially motivated harassment and unfair treatment (Foster, 1997; Milner & Howard, 2004). In addition to the teachers lost during that time period, the number of Black students who majored in the field of education declined by 66% during 1975-1985. Another 21,515 Black teachers were displaced during 1984-1989 as a direct result of education admission requirements and certification requirements (Tillman, 2010). Table I displays the impact on Black teachers caused by the *Brown vs Board of Education* ruling.

Table 2.1 The Impact of the Brown vs Board of Education Ruling on the Displacement of African American Teachers

Pre 1954	Approximately 82,000 Black teachers taught 2 million Black children who attended mostly segregated schools.
1954	On May 17, the U.S. Supreme court ruled in the case <i>Brown vs the Board of Education</i> .
1954-1965	More than 38,000 Black educators in 17 southern and border states were dismissed from their positions.
1975-1985	The number of Black students who chose teacher education as a major declined by 66%.
1984-1989	New teacher certifications requirement requirements and teacher education program admission requirements resulted in the displacement of 21,515 Black teachers.

SOURCE: Tillman (2010)

Because of the ruling, Black teachers endured a “period of adjustment” filled with emotional strain and hardship through experiences that were demoralizing and degrading (Gladwell, 2016). For instance, Black teachers’ skin complexion was examined to decide

whether they were “worthy” of being moved into all-White schools. Lighter-skin teachers were assigned to desegregated schools or in de-facto non-segregated schools, and darker-skin teachers had to work in other parts of the community or country (Foster, 1997; Gladwell, 2016). The perspective was that the lighter-skinned Black teachers were more closely connected to the White students and teachers, making them less of a threat; whereas the darker-skinned teachers were considered too different and lacking in intellectual capacity and the ability to teach effectively. As a result, the lighter-skinned and the “best” darker-skinned teachers based on student performance results and community popularity were moved into desegregated schools, and principals were made assistant principals usually in charge of discipline (Foster, 1997; Gladwell, 2016; Milner & Howard, 2004). This caused Black students to fear instead of admiring the Black leaders of their schools (Foster, 1997; Gladwell, 2016). The implementation of the policies developed from the verdict of this landmark case took the “voice” away from Black educators in the schooling of Black children, which caused a loss of power and integrity and ultimately began the marginalization of African American female teachers (Milner & Howard, 2004).

The decline of African American teachers during the implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* was one major negative impact of the ruling. The other came from the conditions of the schools that were separate but still not equal. Many of the southern schools where Black teachers taught were far from being equal to those of White teachers. The schools were dilapidated, supplies were limited, and books were discarded from White schools and were not in usable conditions (Foster, 1997; Gladwell, 2016; Milner & Howard, 2004). Most of the all-Black schools were subject to being

closed by the legislature and the children were then bussed to all-White schools. In many of those settings, teachers would make the Black children sit separately from the White children, prohibited the children to mix with each other, and lowered academic expectations based on their belief that the Black children were unable to learn at the same level of the White children. Black teachers argued that many Black students were being harmed by not having Black teachers to help facilitate their learning journey. Integration also caused harm to Black children because they were no longer taught about racial pride and uplift, they were placed in more special education classes, they received more disciplinary infractions than their White counterparts, and they were taught to follow instead of lead (Foster, 1997).

Past Decisions with a Lasting Impact

During segregation, most professions were closed to African Americans, particularly African American women. As a result, most professional African Americans, especially those who liked to learn, became classroom teachers (Foster, 1997). After the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*, most of these educators lost their employment. This was enforced largely in three different ways: (1) School systems began to combine. Black schools were closed, and Black students were then bussed to White schools. Across the South, the 82,000 African American teachers who were in the classroom were reduced by half within a decade after the *Brown v. Board of Education* verdict. (2) Hiring practices: two employment lists were developed, one for Whites and another for Blacks. Oftentimes, the applications received by Blacks would either go into the trash or they would only be hired on a substitute, provisional or part-time basis. This practice significantly reduced full-time gainful employment for African American teacher

pools. (3) Pushout: after being forced to use children's bathrooms, not allowed to communicate with White staff, and suffering other forms of embarrassment and humiliation, teachers were pushed out of the profession (Foster, 1997; Milner & Howard, 2004).

As Malcolm Gladwell (2016) discusses in his Revisionist History podcast documentary (which places emphasis on a series of events that are often misunderstood in modern society), the practices implemented in the aftermath of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling in the past still have an impact on children, schools, and teachers today. This impact is particularly felt by students and teachers of Color—namely African American students and teachers. Gladwell (2016) argued that for an African American student, the world looks very different than that of their White counterparts in public school settings. Their access to academically advanced settings, caring teachers, and positive behavior management systems are far lower than White students. The probability of an African American student to be assigned to an African American teacher is low (Gladwell, 2016). The odds are particularly lower to be in the classroom of an African American female teacher. The presence of an African American teacher for African American students affects a child's trajectory in several different ways: (1) it increases the possibility of enrollment in gifted services is higher; (2) it raises African American students' test scores; (3) it improves class behavior and time-on-task instruction; and (4) it reduces in-school and out-of-school suspensions (Gladwell, 2016).

The possibility of African American students being assigned to gifted services is increased when they are enrolled in the class of African American teachers. Teachers play the role of gatekeeper and ultimately decide if a child will benefit from gifted

services. Only half of African American students are referred to gifted services when enrolled in a White teacher's class in comparison to other African American students enrolled in a Black teacher's class (Gladwell, 2016). Those same African American teachers who believe in and support African American students influence higher performance levels, improved class behavior, and reduced in-school and out-of-school suspensions of African American boys by 39 percent (Gladwell, 2016).

As Gladwell (2016) stated, the ranks of African American teachers in present day have yet to recover from the humiliation and mass firings endured in the 1950s and 1960s as a direct effect of the *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* ruling. He highlights that the percentages of African American teachers are far fewer than that of African American students though research specifically shows the need for African American teachers for the overall success of African American students. He places specific emphasis on four states including Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and South Carolina, which purged their classrooms of African American teachers in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* and continues the disproportionate hiring practices today (Gladwell, 2016).

Historical Context of African American Students and African American Teachers

The role of African American teachers was directly related to the advancement of the African American community after emancipation and until segregation, before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case in Topeka, Kansas. African American women had a long legacy of teaching and being instrumental within schools for African American students. These teachers were charged with uplifting the Black race through preparing children in segregated schools for independence, freedom, self-reliance, and

respectability while nurturing them as they navigated the injustices they faced (Farinde, et al, 2016; Gladwell, 2016; Irvine, 1989).

In the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*, Black students were often bussed to distant districts and schools that were predominantly White, causing a substantial number of Black teachers to lose their jobs. Because White parents did not want their children to have Black teachers, many of the schools that educated African Americans were closed, causing Black teachers to be displaced within the profession. As a result, African American students no longer attended community schools that promoted their cultural backgrounds. Instead, they were placed in schools that promoted a White curriculum taught by White teachers (Milner & Howard, 2004).

Teacher Preparation Programs

It is important to address the current state of teacher education preparation programs in the conversation of retention of African American teachers. Garcia & Weiss (2019) found that from 2008-2009 to the 2015-2016 school year, the annual number of education degrees awarded fell by 15.4 percent. They also learned that the annual number of people who completed a teacher preparation program fell by 27.4 percent. This overall decline in teachers completing professional training is one of three areas that contribute to the pervasive teacher shortage in America's schools according to Garcia & Weiss (2019). The other two identified areas include state-by-state subject area vacancies, as well as personal testimonials and data from state and school district officials (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

The National Council on Teacher Quality (2014) found that over fifty percent of the nation's teacher preparation programs were failing to adequately prepare elementary and secondary teachers for the classroom (Greenberg, Walsh, & McKee, 2014). The researchers conducted a comprehensive study of over 1,600 preparation programs and identified three major flaws in the majority: programs (1) do not assure that every student is prepared to teach the subjects they could be assigned once they enter the field; (2) insufficiently support candidates as they take on full-time teaching responsibilities; and (3) have extremely low admissions standards (Greenberg, Walsh, & McKee, 2014).

According to Winn (2018), an additional flaw of teacher preparation programs is the need for a radical reframing of teacher education to resist colonizing pedagogies and practices that privilege dominant ways of knowing. Joyce King (1991) sought to do just that in her social foundations of education course, which operated with the goal of, “sharpening the ability of students to think critically about educational purposes and practice in relation to social justice and to their own identities as teachers” (p. 140). During her course, offered in 1986 and again in 1988, she conducted a content analysis study and asked her students the question, “How did our society get to be this way?” From their responses, she found that students explained racial inequality in one of three categories: (1) the result of slavery. In this designation, African Americans were perceived as ex-slaves, and the “disabilities of slavery” were believed to have been passed down intergenerationally; (2) the denial or lack of equal opportunity for African Americans. In this designation, there is denial of equal opportunity for African Americans (e.g., less education, lack of jobs, low wages and poor health care). Persistently unequal status of African Americans was seen as an effect of poverty and

systemic discrimination, or (3) the framework of a society in which racism and discrimination are normative. Existence of discrimination was the primary focus. Her results found that of 24 students sampled in 1986, 10 were in category one, 11 were in category two, and one was in category three. In 1988, of the 35 students, 11 were in category one, 24 were in category two, and 0 were in category three. These findings reveal that most of the participants explained racial inequality in limited ways, either as (1) a result of prejudice and discrimination without recognizing the structural inequity built into the social order, or (2) as a historically inevitable consequence of slavery. Explanations from the students fail to link racial inequity to other forms of societal exploitation and oppression (King, 1991). These conversations on the undergraduate level during teacher preparation programs are needed to assist teachers, Black and non-Black, in examining how they can shift their own beliefs, practices, and structures to improve the quality of education for all students while sustaining African American teachers in the profession (Mosely, 2018).

Darling-Hammond (2020) noted that teacher preparation produces candidates who feel better prepared, more efficacious, have more positive impacts on student learning and achievement, and stay in the field longer when the following components are present:

- (1) A common, clear vision of good teaching that permeates all coursework and clinical experiences, creating a coherent set of learning experiences;
- (2) Well-defined standards of professional practice and performance that are used to guide and evaluate course work and clinical work;

- (3) A strong, core curriculum, taught in the context of practice, grounded in knowledge of child and adolescent development and learning, an understanding of social and cultural contexts, curriculum, assessment, and subject matter pedagogy;
- (4) Extended, well-supervised clinical experiences that are carefully chosen to support the ideas presented in closely interwoven coursework;
- (5) Use of performance assessments and portfolio evaluation that apply learning to real problems of practice; and
- (6) Shared beliefs and practices among school-and university-based faculty, along with well-established partnerships between the schools and university.

As diversity in our nation's classrooms increases, the need for African American women teachers become even more imperative for the success of our students.

Retaining African American Teachers

Knowing the grave nature of the need of Black teachers, Mosely (2018) and The Black Teacher Project seeks to assist educators who are not Black in critically evaluating their beliefs and practices to improve quality education while providing Black teachers with knowledge, skills, and community that will support them to thrive in their work. With the vision of developing a well prepared and well supported Black teaching force that reflects the diversity and excellence of Black people in the country, The Black Teacher Project focuses on sustaining, developing, recruiting, and retaining Black teachers.

The recruitment process should begin with seeking African American females to enroll into Teacher Preparation programs. Despite the growing diversity of the student and teaching populations, African American teachers still remain underrepresented in classrooms as well as in teacher preparation programs (Farinde-Wu & Griffen, 2019; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017). Farinde-Wu & Griffen (2019) noted that Black women benefit immensely from entering traditional four-year baccalaureate programs which culminate with teacher certification exams. Yet, 40% of teachers of Color enter the teaching profession through alternative pathways which is a higher level than their White counterparts (Cochran, 2004). Darling-Hammond (2020) identifies five ways to enter the profession: (1) enter with little or no training; (2) enter through pre-service program; (3) completion of a four-year undergraduate program; (4) completion of a five-year joint program with bachelor's and master's (subject and teaching); or (5) completion of one-two year Masters of Teaching degree, separate from bachelors. Cochran (2004) notes that though alternative avenues are beneficial for diversifying the teacher workforce, the lack of preparation received creates a revolving door once in the profession. The conundrum for African American females interested in the teaching profession then becomes whether to enroll in an alternative pathway and possibly be less prepared for classroom placement or enter into a traditional program and experience numerous challenges related to entry and completion of the program (Farinde-Wu & Griffen, 2019). Though Black women who complete traditional education programs are afforded experiential opportunities that alternative pathways do not provide, Farinde-Wu and Griffen (2019) identify the following downfalls to enrollment in those teacher preparation programs: (1) Black students are failed in comparison to their White peers for overall preparation; (2) Black

teachers have lower first-time passing rates for their teacher certification exams; (3) Black women indicate feelings of unresponsive professors and isolation; and (4) Black women note limited course offerings and a lack of relevant coursework.

Teacher education programs produce an overwhelmingly White teaching force that poses two challenges for the Black students who are enrolled in teacher education programs: (1) the absence of cultural representation; and (2) less effective teacher preparation experiences (Farinde-Wu & Griffen, 2019). As scholars have noted, there is consistent discourse around the deficiencies of Black students (King, Morrison, Mosely, 2018); however, those perceptions carry over to how teachers are viewed, as they were once students (Mosely, 2018). Former United States Secretary of Education John King stated that Black teachers have “invisible taxes” imposed on them once they enter the field that he defined as: (1) an expectation to serve as disciplinarian, rather than academic instructors; (2) uncompensated time spent in informal leadership roles as the unofficial liaison with families of Color; (3) being skipped over for more formal (and often paid) leadership opportunities; (4) being expected to teach remedial-instead of advanced courses; and (5) liaisons for schools and advocates for families (King, 2016; Mosely, 2018). Black teachers regularly must combat a number of microaggressions, while challenging the myth of intellectual inferiority and proving their worth (Mosely, 2018).

The Black Teacher Project (Mosely, 2018) conducted an ethnographic study that included professional development sessions and administered surveys to 63 Black teachers. Among them, three veteran, four mid-career, and four novice Black teachers were interviewed to understand how the professional development impacted their teaching experience and retention. These participants were selected because of their

participation in year-long programming and drop-in programming sessions offered to the group. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and re-coded to discover emergent patterns. Data was analyzed using grounded theory. Participants reported having a “safe” space to bring their identity into conversations about their practice in the profession and the intricate connection it had to their work. Teachers also appreciated having a space to talk with African American colleagues about navigating the structural and systematic inequities. They reported that the support from this group impacted their decision to remain in the profession after receiving the skills and knowledge that they did not have before participating in the study. The lack of support in the profession is one of many identified causes for teacher turnover.

Identified Causes of Teacher Turnover

Darling-Hammond (2016) reported that in the United States, annual teacher attrition is approximately 8% of all teachers. The result of attrition accounts for about 90% of the demands for new teachers. This is an increase from 1990, when it was 5%. The total number of teachers who change schools or leave the profession is increased to 16% when the eight percent of teachers who shift to a different school each year is factored in. In Darling-Hammond’s (2016) report, she identified seven contributing factors as the cause for teacher turnover: (1) dissatisfaction with testing and accountability measures; (2) lack of administrative support; (3) dissatisfaction with the teaching career; (4) limited influence on school policies; (5) large teaching loads; (6) limited opportunities for professional development; and (7) dissatisfaction with the working conditions or school culture.

Dissatisfaction with testing and accountability measures is identified because of policies and legislation such as “No Child Left Behind,” which have all caused teachers in low performing and poverty-stricken schools to often be targeted by district and state personnel, and often required to “teach to the test.” In some cases, the administrators and teachers in these schools were threatened with firing or told that their schools would be closed if the performance of the students did not improve. In these situations, teachers often reported that they were dissatisfied with the assessment measures, lacked enjoyment in their career choice, and were not motivated to work harder with the students who needed it most (Darling-Hammond, 2016). Lack of administrative support was reported more often by novice teachers who were more likely to leave if they did not have peer assistance or administrative support. This comes in the form of mentorship, peer meetings, coaching opportunities, and collaborative planning (Glennie, Mason, & Edmonds, 2016). Dissatisfaction with the teaching career is a major cause of teachers’ inability to identify a path of achievable advancement, especially with lack of opportunity to provide professional input, and overall dissatisfaction with teaching assignment (Darling-Hammond, 2016). Limited influence on school policies refers to the decisions made on the behalf of teachers without consulting their expertise of daily routines and operations. This lack of inclusion in the decision-making process reduced overall teacher autonomy and control in their classrooms. Large teaching loads with demanding class sizes were overwhelming for one teacher to manage without the help of a teaching assistant. Some teachers reported having as many as 28 students during an academic year. Limited opportunity for professional development was another significant factor, as teachers who do not benefit from professional development or have few opportunities to

learn and perfect their craft are oftentimes frustrated and ultimately results in them leaving the profession. Dissatisfaction with the working conditions or school culture which includes class size, school location, student body poverty level, levels of student achievement, friendliness, and congeniality of coworkers are all encompassed in the conditions and culture of a school setting (Darling-Hammond, 2016; Glennie, Mason & Edmonds, 2016).

When teachers of Color were asked to identify their determining factors for leaving the profession, in addition to the listed responses above from Darling-Hammond's (2016) study, they also identified low salaries, being assigned to disciplinarian roles, loneliness caused by isolation, and other professional disadvantages (Farinde, Allen, & Lewis; 2016). Paying attention to teachers' experiences and representing their voices are particularly important (Glennie, Mason, & Edmonds, 2016). With low representation of African American teachers in public schools and low retention rates of those who are currently in the profession, it is imperative for African American teachers to determine how to operate in the predominantly White, middle-class teaching force. A teaching force that is more reflective of the diversity in the United States that can positively impact the social and academic progress of African American students is essential. Documenting the lived experiences of African American teachers (Farinde, Allen & Lewis, 2016) is an important starting point. This dissertation study includes the voices of African American female teachers who left the K-12 classroom and/or education profession within their first five years.

Identified Causes within the African American Community for Teacher Turnover

In the book, *Black Teachers on Teaching*, Michelle Foster (1997) addressed the twofold problem of the decline of Black teachers in schools within the United States concurrent with Black teachers not having representation in the research literature. To address the growing crisis of the deterioration of Black teachers in the classrooms while capturing their experiences in their words, Foster interviewed 20 teachers born between 1905 and 1973 to understand how teaching has been understood and experienced by Blacks engaged in the teaching profession. During her study, Foster (1997) used a process she coined “community nomination,” to identify and select the participants. She called for community members to nominate someone they deemed to be an outstanding teacher in the African American community. She then reviewed the nominations received and selected the teachers who were nominated by multiple sources. The interviews were recorded in workplaces and homes. She divided the participants into the three groups of Elders who were the retired teachers, Veterans who taught for at least ten years, and Novices who were relatively new to the profession with less than ten years of experience. She interviewed them on the topics of social, economic and cultural backgrounds of families; friends, mentors, and other influences on their lives; reasons for choosing a career in teaching; understanding of teachers’ roles; and the changes they observed over the course of their careers. As an African American researcher, she noted that belonging to the same cultural group and sharing a common speech pattern as participants can facilitate the recovery of authentic accounts, however, she also recognized that the experiences among members of the same cultural group were not monolithic.

During the course of her personal narrative interviews that provided first-person accounts of the personal experiences of the Black teacher participants, common issues which could also contribute as factors for teachers leaving the profession were identified among the majority: (1) lack of administrative support, (2) student behavior causing stress and burnout, (3) lack of teacher autonomy over schoolwide and classroom decisions, (4) lack of collegiality between principal and faculty, (5) decline in parental support, (6) concerns about safety, (7) racial tension between White and Black faculty, (8) low expectations for African American students, (9) increase in paperwork, procedures, and policies, and (10) negative political implications on the profession. A few of these responses overlap with the results yielded from Darling-Hammond's (2016) findings, which also included (1) lack of administrative support, (2) lack of teacher autonomy, and (3) large teaching loads. The items that differed vastly between the two results included (1) stress and burnout from the decline in student behavior, (2) low expectations for Black students, and (3) tension in racial relationships.

Foster (1997) noted, and the participants further supported, that for three decades following emancipation and the first six decades of the twentieth century, ministry, postal workers, and teachers were among the few occupations obtainable to college-educated Blacks. Unlike the first two professions, teaching was open to women on an equal basis making it one of the primary leadership roles available to Black women. Those Black women considered their role as community work contributing to racial uplift for African Americans.

This literature review supports the need to focus on the topic of the decline of African American women in the teaching profession. As discovered through the review

of literature, African Americans embarked on a life-long fight for the ability to receive an education and the equity of formal education spaces (Hampton, 1986; Walker, 1985). During this fight, African Americans have suffered the decline of African American teachers (Foster, 1997).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was a major education initiative that became law during the Bush Administration. Though the intent was to raise educational achievement levels for all students and close the racial/ethnic achievement gap, unfortunately, it failed to achieve those goals. The population it was developed to serve included students of Color, children living in poverty, new English language learners, and children with disabilities. However, those students were harmed more from the legislation. The unintended negative consequences received were narrowed curriculum; an increased focus on low-level-skills; high stakes testing that created the culture of teaching to the test; inappropriate testing for English language learners and students with special needs; and unequal education resources across schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

It is evident in the wake of “No Child Left Behind” and other policy changes that Black teachers are needed more now than ever before to stabilize conditions for Black students and students overall (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gladwell, 2016; Milner & Howard, 2004).

Intersectionality

Historically, inequality was understood in one dimension of either race, or gender, or class. With a growing emphasis on intersectionality, researchers now recognize that race, gender, and class intersect and interlock into complex forms of social

relationships and multifaceted layers of inequality. Intersectionality was developed by women of Color and provides an important framework to understand the world (Windsong, 2018).

Building on the conceptual framework of the study, I am aware that participants' lived experiences operate as intersectional rather than in isolation. I was particularly interested in capturing what it meant to be a Black woman who left the teaching profession during their induction years. Hence, interpretations of interview questions, field notes, and documents were particularly attuned to five aspects of narrative research for intersectionality (Berry & Cook, 2019):

- (1) focuses on multiple inequalities embedded in identities and intersecting forms of oppression;
- (2) avoids hierarchies of oppression;
- (3) articulates experiences of at least one of the three forms of intersectionality;
- (4) centers the voice(s) of the multiply burdened, and;
- (5) uses counter-storytelling to provide alternative realities to debunk the master narrative(s).

p. 93

A commentary on intersectional aspects when developing life stories can be seen on Table 2.2. In the section on positionality, I discuss the role that my own multiple, intersecting identities played in the data collection and analyses.

Table 2.2 *Intersectionality Considerations for Life Stories*

Considerations	Comments
----------------	----------

<p>(1) focuses on multiple inequalities embedded in identities and interesting forms of oppression</p>	<p>I recognize that interlocking, and sometimes contradictory, influences of being Black and woman. Here I plan to pay close attention to participants' comments about what it means to be a Black woman in the teaching profession and in life.</p>
<p>(2) avoids hierarchies of oppression</p>	<p>I understand that I will have to exercise care when analyzing and retelling participants' life stories such that it does not end up <i>comparing</i> Black and White women teachers. My goal is to retell the participants' stories in their own right.</p>
<p>(3) articulates experiences of at least one of the three forms of intersectionality</p>	<p>I am aware that the intersection of class may be an integral component of their life stories in addition to their gender and race (Brah & Phoenix, 2004).</p>
<p>(4) centers the voice(s) of the multiply burdened</p>	<p>Attention will be given to seeing what can be learned from Black women and understanding the multi-dimensionality of their voices.</p>
<p>(5) uses counter-storytelling to provide alternative realities to debunk the master narrative(s).</p>	<p>The life histories are intended to validate the voices, life experiences, and perspectives of Black women who were former teachers. In so doing, the locus of power of the research process is shifted by situating Black women as knowers with (perhaps) distinctive views (Chapman, Hartlep, Vang, Lipsey-Brown, & Joseph, 2019).</p>

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Informed by life stories and life histories (Adriansen, 2012) I represented the data in narrative form and focused on the participants roles as teachers and reasons for leaving the classroom. Adriansen (2012) indicated that a life story is concerned with the story told and understanding the person who tells about their life. In contrast, the aim of life history is to understand how the patterns of different life stories can be related to the wider political, social, environmental, and historical context.

In this research, I analyzed for commonalities and contrast across the participants' life stories, answered my research questions and connected salient points to extant literature. My aim was to better understand the wider context in the field of education, specifically the decline of African American female teachers. When possible, I made connections to the wider historical context (Adriansen, 2012).

I sought to learn more about individual lives but also to represent how individual African American female lives as former teachers were shaped by personal experiences and broader social experiences. With the use of first-person accounts, which have long been employed by individuals to encode and record the experiences of African Americans (Foster, 1997), I gained insight about the participants' decisions to leave the profession, while also adding to the extant academic literature. I collected life stories to focus on capturing the lived experiences and voices of African American women teachers who left the profession during their induction years. I sought to illuminate the

experiences of three research participants in their own words. Three participants were selected to gain a diverse scope of experiences and perspectives while creating a manageable process for collecting life story data.

According to Dhunpath (2000), the narrative element refers to the way the educators share their professional experiences in a subjective narrative format. This narrative activity serves as a tool for reflecting collaboratively on a specific situation (Goodley, 2004). During the interviews, the participants were prompted to share stories based on the past and present (Goodley, 2004), which included details about their preparation to enter the field of education, time as a classroom teacher, the motivating factors that caused them to leave the profession, and their current employment. Their responses constituted their personal story that I then analyzed in order to shed light on what novice teachers face in their careers as educators.

This chapter provides details and justification for the research design. Below I provide the research questions and discuss the context, participants, data sources, data analysis, and discussion.

Research Questions

Five questions were posed for this study. A summary of the corresponding data sources and analyses can be seen in Table 2.

1. What can be learned from the life stories of former African American female teachers who left from teaching in public school classrooms during their induction years?

- 1a. What do their life stories reveal about the role of gender and race in their educational histories and experiences in the teaching profession?
2. What factors do former African American female teacher participants identify in their decisions to leave the classroom within their first five years of teaching?
3. What recommendations do former African American female teachers offer for decreasing teacher turnover among Black women?
4. What career paths do former African American female teachers pursue once leaving the classroom?

Context

The study took place in South Carolina where 6,482 teachers left the classroom in 2016 (CERRA-Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement, 2017). Of this figure, nearly half of the teachers represented primary and elementary grade levels (Pre-K-5th) (CERRA-Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement, 2017). Because of ongoing teacher attrition, initiatives such as the South Carolina Teaching Fellow program are in place to recruit and prepare high school students for careers in education. In 2012, 1,709 students participated in this pipeline program. Only 171 (10%) were African American (Wilson, 2012).

Participants

I used criterion sampling (Maxwell, 2005) to select the three participants for the study. Seeking to identify participants who met the specific criterion, it was important to select participants who met five characteristics: (1) to self-identify as female; (2) to self-identify as Black and/or African American; (3) to have previous experience teaching in

an elementary school (preschool through fifth grades) in South Carolina; (4) to have five years or less of teaching experience in a South Carolina school; and (5) to have left the teaching profession of their own accord. Participants could have been any age and could have represented a combination of rural, suburban, and urban parts of the state (See Table 3.1).

Because I sought to gain the stories of African American female educators leaving the teaching profession during their induction years, I invited one former classroom teacher who contacted me in need of assistance or guidance when contemplating the decision to leave the profession. She met the six criteria and subsequently, was invited to participate in the study. The additional candidates were identified using flyer advertisement (see Appendix A), social networking groups, social media platforms, and word of mouth. All three teachers knew me from community involvement, through organizations to which we are jointly affiliated, and/or via introductions to me through mutual friends to assist them with their transitions from the classroom. For those who did not qualify based on the criteria above, I asked them to share the names and contact information of other African American women who left the classroom. I extended the invitation to groups of African American women with whom I am connected, which included Black sorority chapters, Black church groups, and professional organizations of Black educators. I used pseudonyms selected by the participants to protect their identities as much as possible. Likewise, I used pseudonyms or redacted the names of the schools and districts that the participants worked in. Participant demographic backgrounds are provided in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 *Participants Demographic Background*

Pseudonym	Number of Years in the Classroom	Grades and Years Taught	Additional District Occupations (Outside of Classroom Teaching)	Current Occupation	Age
Mary	4.5 years	SPED K-5 2013-2017	N/A	Director of Community Engagement for a Nonprofit Organization	28
Carly	4 months	4 th 2015	N/A	High School Career Specialist	26
Mary Jo	5 years	3 rd , 4 th , & 5 th 1999-2004	Lead Teacher Assistant Principal Principal	Educational Consultant	57

Mary

Mary is a native of Oakridge, Tennessee where she attended both public and private schools for her P-12 education. She relocated to Columbia, South Carolina to begin her professional career as a Special Education teacher after graduating from a North Carolina college with a Bachelor of Special Education with an emphasis in Reading. While teaching, she earned a master’s degree at a local college. She taught at a suburban school in the outskirts of a large city in South Carolina. The student population was majority White followed by African Americans and with Latino/a students close behind. The students of Color mostly qualified for free and reduced lunch services an.

Carly

Carly is a native of Columbia, South Carolina where she matriculated through the public-school system and earned a Bachelor of Elementary Education. During the interviews, she was pursuing a Master of Higher Education Administration from the same local college where she earned her undergraduate degree. She taught in an urban Title I school in the heart of a large city in South Carolina. The student population was predominantly African American with the majority qualifying for free and reduced lunch services.

Mary Jo

Mary Jo is a native of Baltimore, Maryland where she matriculated through the public-school system. She relocated to South Carolina while in the military. While enlisted, she enrolled in a local university to earn a Bachelor of Elementary Education. She transferred from active duty to the reserves while completing her teacher preparation requirements. She taught in a suburban school setting with a majority White student population.

Each of the three participants left from teaching in the classroom during their induction period; Mary taught for four and a half years, Carly taught for four months, and Mary Jo taught for five years. All of whom taught in elementary schools in South Carolina and remained the full period of time they taught in the classroom.

Data Sources

Data sources include recorded and transcribed individual interviews and personal and professional artifacts. Details about each source are below.

Interviews

According to Skachkova (2007), “interviewing is the most appropriate method applied by women to study other women” (p.702). Each participant was interviewed three times individually (see Appendix B for sample questions). The three individual interview sessions were approximately 30-150 minutes in length and took place at a time that was convenient to the participant and conducive to a private environment (see Appendix C for interview schedule). All nine interviews took place Spring 2020 via conference call (this modification was a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic that prohibited personal face-to-face contact at the time the interviews were conducted). The first interview session was designed to get to know the participant and was scheduled to be approximately 30-60 minutes in length. This interview was used to gain information about their life backgrounds, birthplaces, family lives, and other general information about the interviewees. The second session was scheduled to be approximately 60-90 minutes and was designed for a discussion of key experiences that occurred during each participant’s classroom teaching, fond memories, what led them to enter the teaching profession, the preparation for their career, experiences within the field of education prior to them entering the classroom, support (if any) received from their school and/or district, and reasons for leaving the classroom. The third session was scheduled to be approximately 30-60 minutes and focused on post-classroom employment and key takeaways each participant wanted to share with policymakers, teacher preparation

programs, administrators, and other classroom teachers. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. During the second and third interviews, I probed responses to questions in previous interviews as needed for clarification and/or elaboration. During the interviews and when re-reading the notes and transcripts, I attended to what participants said (and did not say). I paid attention to chuckles, grins, smirks, inflections in speech, changes in tone, and other aspects of their language to ask probing questions or retrieve additional details.

Documents

The use of life story captured the participant's perspective, personal values, their definitions of situations, and the knowledge they acquired through their experiences (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984). To support their individual interviews, participants were asked to submit personal documents which could include letters, diary entries/blog posts, personal records, samples of lesson plans, photos, professional paperwork, childhood papers, and other artifacts (Goodley, 2004). These were used to supplement their stories and connect to the motivating factors identified during their interviews. Comments and explanations that participants have about the documents were included in their stories.

Data Presentation

The narrative representations that were constructed included elements from the past, present, and anticipated future. Pseudonyms were used for participants, locations, and workplaces.

Informed by Life Stories

Telling life stories offers participants opportunities to increase their working knowledge of themselves through the process of reflecting and orally expressing the feelings and emotions connected to their experiences. I produced narrative accounts incorporating the words of the participants (Atkinson, 2007). Next, I analyzed for similarities and dissimilarities across all three narratives and answered my research questions.

Because people's actions can be rooted in their life stories and previous experiences, insights may be gleaned about the nature and meaning of what leaving the teaching profession meant to participants in the study. The method employed in this study aimed to penetrate deeper than other approaches by allowing participants to tell their stories and present their views (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). The interview data revealed that experiences and interactions they had with their former teachers served as a basis for what they thought they would encounter once in the profession. To a certain extent, it also served as a motivating factor for staying in the classroom as long as they did. Each of them eventually faced a period of reconciliation in what they experienced as a student compared to what they experienced as a teacher to determine if their expectations were met and if they would remain in the profession. Carly and Mary found that they did not align and made the decision to leave the classroom setting. Mary Jo was on the opposite end of the spectrum and realized that her expectations did align yet opted to transition into a position that would in turn provide her the opportunity to prepare and nurture future classroom teachers.

Life stories are narratives that convey information about individuals' lives. Paying attention to the sociohistorical contexts of participants is an important part of understanding the stories that they share (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Life stories allow researchers to view the lives of participants as texts. Concerned with capturing the complexities of participants' life experience, I used narrative representation in my research (Polkinghorne, 1995). Epistemologically, storied accounts are presented as a legitimate form of reasoned knowledge (Bruner, 1986) and a way of knowing (Coulter & Smith, 2009). Data from narrative inquires, "consist of actions, events, and happenings, but whose analysis produces stories" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.6). Unlike *non-narrative* research, narratives allow the centrality of emotions in lived experiences (Coulter & Smith, 2009), which was something important to me as the researcher.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In order to examine what participants' life experiences meant to them, I sought out fidelity rather than "truth." *Truth* implies objectivity (e.g., what happened in a situation); whereas *fidelity* acknowledges subjectivity (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995). I readily acknowledge that each of the three stories reflect only one respective version of how the events took place. The question of "*did it really happen the way you describe it*" is problematic (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 578). Just as eyewitnesses to the same account may give different versions, so is true with narrative research. Nevertheless, I sought to use a tone and voice that represents the participant's experience with fidelity and respect.

During the data analysis processes, interviews were transcribed for each participant to review, analyze, and identify discrepancies. This process, called member checking, took place after each individual interview session and again at the conclusion

of the study. Member checking is employed in qualitative research to maintain validity (Candela, 2019). Participants' follow-up comments, modifications and extensions are a part of the representation of data. This process of member checking was necessary to establish trustworthiness of the data (Carlson, 2010) and maintain ethical practices in the research process (Goodley, 2004). Prior to the beginning of each subsequent session, the notes were transcribed and emailed to the participants individually for review to ensure the accuracy of the information received during the interview. A follow-up email or telephone call was provided if modifications or corrections were required or confirmation of the accuracy of the edits were needed. Opportunities were provided at the end of the first session and at the beginning and end of each subsequent session to give any additional information that participants would like to add. Likewise, opportunities were provided to omit sensitive information or specific experiences. This allowed me, as the researcher, to consider the sensitive nature of the process of the participants sharing their personal life stories and accounts of what led to an important decision in their professional careers (Goodley, 2004).

Statements from the interview transcripts were synthesized alongside the research findings from the literature review. Because people use different words to express themselves, it was important to select words that accurately represented the meanings of the responses of the participants that were compared across participants to produce possible similarities and differences across experiences (Kumar, 2014). To organize the participants' responses, each participant's comments were paired with the appropriate data points identified in the research. Once the transcribed notes and links to the research were approved by the participant, a methodology table was created to

visually organize the participants responses to the research questions and the patterns generated from the participant interviews. These were developed in two different formats—one that included the information for each participant developed in personal and professional narratives and the other developed into a table that identified their motivating factors for leaving the classroom allowing me to answer my research questions.

Once completed, the draft was shared with the participant for review and accepted as a complete draft. Participants could disagree with my conclusions and interpretations and were provided the opportunity to express concerns with the findings. None of them chose to do so. The findings stand as those approved by the participants.

Once I had accurate representations of the interviews, I identified evidence from each participant that reflected the items on the table that illustrates the motivating factors each participant gave for leaving the teaching profession. The data is represented in an analytical discussion of the data results. I do not present a chronological, linear story and include a discussion that visit, and re-visit prominent points made by the participants.

Positionality

Concurring with Ladson-Billings (2000), I readily acknowledge that I have a political and personal stake in the education of Black children. I have to be acutely aware of my positionality at all levels of the research process—from the conception to the final presentation of the results and discussion. As an educated African American female in my late thirties who taught in a public elementary classroom for a three-year period, I possess an insider and outsider perspective to this research topic. I am considered an insider due to my racial and gender characteristics. I am also considered an insider due to

teaching elementary school age children for three years, which is within the induction period- first five years of teaching. Additionally, I am considered an insider due to my familiarity with the state of South Carolina and the process of earning teacher certification, licensure, and teaching in the state which is required of the participants of the study. I was regarded as an outsider due to the institutional role as a university researcher and the ten-year span of time since serving as a classroom teacher (Acosta, 2018).

My position and perspective are more refined during this period of life than it would have been had I pursued this research when I first left the field or earlier in my doctoral studies. As a mother of two girls, a former teacher educator, and a university executive leader, I now have a broader view of various factors that contribute to the teaching and learning process for African American children, the demands of the teaching profession, the preparation of classroom teachers, and the challenges faced by and ultimate decline of African American women in the career.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Teachers

*Teachers
Paint their minds
And guide their thoughts
Share their achievements
And advise their faults*

*Inspire a love
Of knowledge and truth
As you light the path
Which leads our youth*

*For our future brightens
With each lesson you teach
Each smile you lengthen
Each goal you help reach*

*For the dawn of each poet
Each philosopher and king
Begins with a Teacher
And the wisdom they bring
By. Kevin William Huff*

Teachers by Kevin William Huff is a fitting poem to introduce the findings of this section that represents the experiences of three women who developed the love for education and the teaching profession for many of the reasons emphasized in the poem. This poem is successful in highlighting the countless roles and values embodied by teachers yet, simultaneously, illustrates the magnitude of the career that is often taken for granted. Each of the three participants, in their own way, described the inspiration, guidance,

nurture, love, and support they received from their teachers which they all sought to provide to the students in their care. Teaching is the profession that makes all professions possible. But the three African American women interviewed in this study all expressed, in various ways, their shared belief of the lack of appreciation for teachers—specifically African American female teachers. In the following section, I provide an overview of three participants' life histories before addressing findings related to the five research questions.

Participants' Life Stories

Participants' life stories were derived from three interviews. Interviews were divided into three sessions which focused on specific aspects of participants' journeys. The first session allowed me to get to know them as individuals, gain insights about them and their experiences as learners, and learn about their inspiration for entering the profession. The second interview was designed to revisit the days of their lives during their classroom placement. I wanted to understand the nuances of teaching from their perspectives and discuss the motivating factors that contributed to them leaving their positions. In the third and final session, we explored how they have transitioned in their career trajectory, if they stayed within the field of education, and how, if at all, their skillset is used in their new roles. Each participant's story is presented in turn. Intersecting themes across the three stories are presented later in this chapter.

Carly. Twenty-six-year-old Carly was the youngest participant in the study. She has a studious look when wearing her large frame glasses, and the brightest smile on her caramel complexion skin tone. She wears her hair in red curly tendrils to match her fun-loving Spirit. Her bubbly personality is heard through her giggles, chuckles, and laughs

during our telephone interviews and shines most when describing the things, she enjoys in her life such as family, friends, and fond memories. She is eager to strengthen herself personally and professionally as she explores her interests, purpose, and passion. She reluctantly entered the field of education, initially, as a classroom teacher which is easily detected in her voice when she describes her teaching experiences. Her voice quickly shifts from the energetic tone that she typically has to a somber and drained tone when rehashing her past role as a classroom teacher. When speaking, she typically has a jolly chuckle, and you can hear the excitement for life in her voice. However, when reflecting on her experiences as a classroom teacher, she takes deep sighs, her voice becomes monotone, and I immediately heard sadness and despair. She did not feel confident; she was cautious, felt anxious, intimidated, and dreaded each day she went to work, so much so that she used every sick and mental health day available prior to resigning. The life, zeal, and excitement that is normally present in her joyful personality was nowhere to be found most days in the profession.

Carly's own K-12 experiences as a public-school student were positive and yielded favorable outcomes with her academic performance and relationships. I envisioned her smiling warmly through the phone as she shared that she earned high grades in her classes, was active in several curricular activities that included band, teacher cadet, and robotics, developed close relationships with her peers, and reported having a good rapport with her teachers during her matriculation period between elementary and high schools. However, her pleasant tone drastically changed as she shared how she experienced the opposite during her teacher preparation program at a small local women's PWI. She explained that she struggled to develop close relationships

with her professors, found course work extremely challenging, did not have close friendships with many of her peers of diverse backgrounds, and did not enjoy her experiences in the school settings. Unlike her P-12 learning experiences, her undergraduate experience was in a predominantly White setting with a lower percentage of racial diversity among her classroom peers. Though she described facing a litany of challenges in her teacher preparation program, she was sustained by what she gained from her service placement as a City Year member and optimistic that she could spark that magical feeling once again as a classroom teacher.

Hoping for the best as a new teacher in 2015, she sought to contribute to the teaching and learning process for the children in her local home school alma mater district. She encountered a series of challenges that resulted in her leaving the profession within a short four-months. For example, she described: situations which involved violent and mischievous students; arguments with parents about student academic performance; behavior issues; low parental engagement; lack of support from administrators; overwhelming mandated policies and procedures; and the absence of healthy working relationships among colleagues due to a toxic work environment that bred distrust and competition among staff. Additionally, she recounted that she never felt balanced in that role. She did not feel at peace or content and constantly felt that her easy-going personality was out of alignment. She described having to constantly “fuss” at students, be defensive with parents, and overperform for administrators- referencing the constant observation and evaluation measures placed on them as classroom teachers. The situation caused her to be extremely stressed and fatigued during her attempt to serve students and meet their educational needs. She stated with agony in her voice how she felt like a

failure every day she entered the school. The weight of not being able to do or give her best to her students or herself was the largest challenge that she was unable to overcome. Still longing to be a part of the education process, after leaving her post as an elementary classroom teacher, she became a career service professional in a public high school setting. In this role, she prepared students for college, career, and vocational placements. She designed webinars, lectures, and presentations to educate the students on various career and higher education options available for them. She facilitated support sessions to assist students with completing applications, developing resumes, interview skills, and exploration activities for post high school career and educational interests. She also became unsatisfied with this role as she perceived it to be less valued and respected than the role of a classroom teacher. In her opinion, the field of education and society in large respects classroom teachers more than paraprofessionals. So, though she experienced negative aspects during her period in the profession, she felt a decline in overall respect and social status in her current role. As a result, she enrolled in a Master's degree program at her alma mater undergraduate college to complete a degree in higher education. Her goal is to gain employment in a college of education program at a university and work to enhance the teacher preparation process for future teachers. She recently moved back in with her parents as she finishes her degree program and rebuilds her professional career. When discussing her interests, she identified her inability to qualify for several of the job placements that would have been ideal for her talent and skillset. As a result, she decided to pursue an administrative position in the College of Education at a local college or university once completed with her degree.

Mary. Thirty-year-old Mary was the first participant interviewed in the study. She is a self-proclaimed Southern Belle and loves all things that are full of southern charm from luxury travel, front porch rocking chairs, outdoor picnics, beach visits, festive activities with complimenting attire, and Clemson Tigers football. During the interviews, she was eagerly and excitedly waiting and preparing for the arrival of her first baby girl. She dreamed of wearing matching monogram clothing, doing mommy and me excursions, and grooming her to follow her footsteps of joining her beloved sorority as a fourth-generation legacy member. Her milk-chocolate skin is complemented by her pristine appearance that includes long flowing black hair, pearly white teeth, neatly manicured nails, and fashion forward clothing, accessories, and makeup. Her personality is as positive and precise as her appearance. She is full of joy and energy. She has a zest and shares enthusiastically of her experiences and fond memories of life--especially the ones that includes family traditions she shared with her grandparents, parents, and sibling in the rural and beach areas of the state.

Mary liked the idea of teaching. She liked the idea of working with students, particularly younger students. As a student, she always loved reading and writing. She recalls her early commitment to reading and believed that literacy opened so many doors and worlds which contributed to her growth and development. Due to her strong love for reading, she initially thought teaching would be the perfect avenue for sharing that passion with others. Unfortunately, she realized within a short period of time that she would not be able to sustain that original career goal.

Mary left her student teaching experience with a romanticized view of the teaching profession. That expectation did not mirror her reality once she began her new

career. She has always held teaching and the career field of education in high regards and believes that teachers are the backbone of the country with skills, talents, roles, and functions that cannot be duplicated by other professionals. As a result, she became a special education teacher with a focus on reading and math.

As she reflected on her years in the classroom as a teacher, she shared that she does not believe teachers have adequate preparation for all the things they encounter as a classroom teacher. She believes this is in addition to the lack of respect, increased requirements of behavior management and paperwork, job restrictions of upward promotion and personal development, and the extra tasks that teachers are expected to do - mostly at their own financial expense. She feels that her hard work, strong commitment, and dedication to her craft and responsibilities were met with constant criticism and being told repeatedly that nothing was good enough. That, itself, was the most prominent reason for her leaving the classroom in just four and a half years. She believed that her gifts and passion would be appreciated in another setting that would also provide upward career and professional growth as well as time to enjoy family and life. Since completing this study, she now has a position that permits her to do all of the above. Additionally, she and her husband welcomed their beautiful baby girl and the dreams and desires she shared for her personal and professional life came true.

Mary Jo. Mary Jo is the oldest participant in the study. Her experiences in the teacher preparation program, the classroom, and purpose for leaving the profession differs vastly from the other two participants. Mary Jo has an inviting demeanor reminiscent of a grandmother's love. She has caramel brown skin, a beautiful bright smile, a short sassy haircut, and is an average height. She often speaks of her faith,

chuckles when she talks, and has a voice that glows through the phone. After completing active duty in the military, she went into the reserve and pursued a teaching career as a mid-age college student in her thirties. She served on base during the day and commuted approximately an hour away to attend evening courses at a Predominantly White University (PWI). She initially thought she would retire from the profession as a classroom teacher which would have had her teaching for 20 years. Instead, she only taught for five.

Though Mary Jo entered the profession as a mid-life career changer, she always believed she would ultimately become a teacher. She shared that she was in good educational environments as she matriculated through her Pre-K-12 grades. She described her teachers as having strong commitments to their learners, great work ethics, and engaged her in positive learning experiences which she cites as the experiences that propelled her into the field. With parents who are now deceased, she reflects fondly on her memory as an elementary student when her father would take her report card to work and brag about her earning all As. She stated that she always maintained great relationships with her teachers, completed all her assignments and actively participated in classroom and extracurricular learning opportunities.

Mary Jo represents the population of African American women who leave the classroom due to professional advancement opportunities. She did not initially seek or pursue promotional advancement. She enjoyed working directly with her students in the third, fourth, and fifth grade classroom settings she taught in where the school population was 90 percent White. Mary Jo believes that if teachers are effective and have demonstrated abilities to attain results of progress and academic achievement with their

students, they will be groomed for other opportunities in the school and/or district. That belief is congruent with what she personally experienced. While teaching in the classroom, she was first selected to do professional development workshops and presentations for other teachers at her school and district level. She recalls that she once had a teacher evaluation meeting with the principal and the assistant principal to discuss her score. She remembers the principal and the assistant principal engaged in a disagreement about what score they would give her on the point scale. The highest available score was 50 points. The principal gave her a 50 on the teacher evaluation and the assistant principal gave her a 49. Mary Jo states that in that moment she realized how effective she was as a teacher. It was at that point that the principal asked her to lead a series of lessons and serve as a model teacher for other teachers to observe her technique. The teachers who participated in the model lessons received evaluation forms to reflect on what they learned from their experience. The teachers expressed their enjoyment and appreciation of learning directly from Mary Jo. They stated that her energy was infectious and her approach to teaching was extremely effective. She would then debrief with them and assist them in enhancing their practices. Shortly thereafter, the district created the Lead Teacher position, of which, she was appointed to in her school. This reduced her classroom teaching time in half and required her to work directly with the teachers. She identified this period as getting pushed out of the classroom.

She was then approached to apply to be an assistant principal. She had to complete the administration certification after successfully securing the position. She believes she was invited to apply because her students were successful, performed on and above grade

level on state assessments, progressed well academically, she built positive relationships with her students and their parents, and did not encounter many discipline issues.

Mary Jo states that she always honored her teachers and looked at the profession as an avenue to impact positive change in the lives of people and help them grow. She has always and continues to maintain a love of teaching—even through the many forms she has encountered it within the profession. Though her love of teaching was evident in her role as a lead teacher, she accepted the recommended promotion of Assistant Principal to further support and nurture the teachers in her school.

Research Questions and Structure of Interviews

Five questions guided this research study and the development of the interview questionnaire (Appendix B). Participants were engaged in a series of three interview sessions (Appendix C) to ascertain details to answer the following research questions: 1) *What can be learned from the life stories of former African American female teachers who left public schools during their induction years?* 2) *What do participants' life stories reveal about the role of gender and race in their K-12 educational histories and their experiences in the teaching profession?* 3) *What motivating factors do former African American female teacher participants identify in their decision to leave the classroom within their first five years?* 4) *What recommendations do former African American female teachers suggest for decreasing teacher turnover among Black women?* and 5) *What career paths do former African American female teachers pursue once leaving the classroom?*

Findings which address the research questions are presented next. The first section addresses what was learned about the participants and their upbringing. The

second section focuses on the intersection of gender and race in their experiences within the profession. The third section identifies the motivating factors for leaving the classroom. The fourth section highlights the recommendations and suggestions for improving the profession to retain teachers. The fifth section explores their new professional roles and responsibilities. The upcoming sections will reveal their results and elaborate on the common threads between the participants.

Insights From Life Stories

Each participant shared three things in common which led them into the education profession: (1) perceived personal success and high academic accomplishments as a student during their own respective Pre-K-12 experiences; (2) a strong respect for educators and the teaching and learning process; and (3) a personal desire to contribute to humanity, society, and the betterment in the lives of children and their families.

Perceived Personal Success as Student Learners During Pre-K-12 Experiences

As noted in the extant literature (Lee, Winfield, & Wilson, 1991; Milner, 2003), participants in this study had P-12 teachers who demonstrated an interest in them outside of the classroom. In turn, this resulted in their being highly motivated to learn and to view education favorably. Common among all three participants, the care from nurturing P-12 teachers allowed them to feel further supported and valued as learners and members of their educational communities. Carly recalls her teacher taking a vested interest in her abilities and skillset that they permitted her to assist with projects in class and paired her with other students she could assist in completing their assignments. Carly stated:

I think my wanting to be a teacher kinda happened when I was in elementary school and I really liked helping my teachers. I was really

good at school. So, it was just like something that came natural to me of teaching people. My teachers would often pair me with other classmates and I would have to help them. That was where I got influenced to be a teacher.

Carly also recalled her teacher permitting her to engage in teacher routines that also sparked her interest in the field. She shared:

When I was in fifth grade, she would let us come to her classroom and grade papers after school. I went to the afterschool program, and she would let us come and grade papers. So, I think that's kinda where that idea of being a teacher really came into my mind.

Mary Jo warmly remembered her high school teacher expressing concern for a decline in her classroom behavior and academic behavior. When she informed them that it was a result of her mother being hospitalized, her teacher cared enough to visit her mom in the hospital. Mary Jo shared:

I was a little bit more aggressive than I would be in class. When she [teacher] approached me, in reference to my behavior, she said; "Well, I will just make sure I give your mom a call." I said to her; "Well you can't call my mom because she's not at home, she's in the hospital." She was like, "Oh, then I'll go see her." She actually came and visited my mother and brought her a gift and everything. I still love her to this day. When I see her, I just drop everything just to talk to her and see how she's doing and all of that. I just thought that it was amazing that she would take that time and interest and come actually check on my mom.

Mary also had fond memories of her teacher making her feel extremely special with the routine of ending each day by telling each individual student that she loved them and something great they had done that day. Mary stated:

She [teacher] just had this way of making everyone feel incredibly important. A part of the classroom community. She used to end every day with telling every kid something great they had done that day. After being in the classroom, I still find that amazing that she would pick up on one thing that everyone did every day that was special, or unique, or something she was proud of. And then she ended every day too with saying “I love you!” I mean, I remember that now at almost 30.

All three participant examples reflect nurturing student-teacher interactions with their respective teachers and capture the essence of students developing a positive attitude which they believed in turn contributed to their ability to achieve at higher levels of success. Though the interviews were conducted via phone, I detected a familiar sense of joy and pride about learning in the voices of the three participants as they reflected on their personal experiences and successes as Pre-K-12 learners with their chuckles, laughs, and inflection in their tones that sometimes became high pitch or cheerful. Mary highlights this experience with her teacher by stating the following with a warm giggle:

I left that classroom and left that experience a better student, a better person, so much more confident. It was like a total kind of turnaround year for me, being super shy and kinda reluctant to accepted and embraced into a classroom culture. She was a game changer for me for sure.

Mary expressed a strong love of reading and the success she encountered during her early learning kindergarten setting during the late 1980s, when she was placed in the higher-level reading group. Although there were not many diverse books available which reflected Black people in schools in the 80s (Boutte, 2002), she recounted with enthusiasm in her voice the enjoyment she had in knowing that she could experience different worlds through reading books. She thought it was the “coolest thing” to read her favorite books, her eyes, and visualize herself doing what the characters were doing in the story. She indicated that it felt great to be able to learn and gain understanding about new things that she would not have otherwise experienced such as various travel destinations, cultures, and different subjects. As a result of developing an early love for reading and a strong relationship with her kindergarten teacher, who was a middle-aged White woman, Mary wanted to become a teacher so she could be a part of what she considered to be the special process of learning and experiencing life, in the lives of young learners. Mary stated:

I remember first being introduced to Boxcar Children in like first or second grade and being able to visualize different worlds and put myself into the stories of these children, Junie B. Jones, and all of these chapter readings we would do.... This reading thing is just so cool! I looked to be able to do it, and do it well, and comprehend and travel [through books] and get so much information from being able to read well.

Like Mary, Carly was able to identify the moment when she fell in love with the field of education. Her love was nurtured and cultivated during her fourth grade

Academic Advanced Placement (AAP) reading and math classes. Carly's teacher, who was a youthful White woman, involved her in assisting with grading papers, after school routines, and fun games and activities during classroom instruction. Carly remembers the genuine love she had for learning and the success she experienced as a student. She described her transition into adolescence as a "rough patch" that would have been hard to navigate without the teachers who were genuinely concerned about her wellbeing and provided her with the support she needed to still be successful in school. She states that it was then that the desire of helping others and becoming a teacher who would help her students through their roughest periods of life cemented her career choice. Carly recalled:

In high school, I kinda went through a rough patch. I had teachers that looked out for me and made sure that I had what I needed to be successful. I think that was another reason why I wanted to be a teacher I wanted to be able to look out for people, or students, who may be having a hard time and be able to help them out. Not just academically, but with other needs as well.

She thought that fondness would naturally transfer over to the role of a classroom teacher.

Similarly, Mary Jo pinpoints her teachers as the catalyst for her personal success. She attributes her former teachers for the powerful emotions and love she has for the field of education. She expressed that the elementary classroom teachers worked hard and were committed to the students' success which fostered a great learning environment for her and her peers. A few of her favorite teachers included her fourth and fifth grade

teachers who also served as her dance coaches. With them, she enjoyed afterschool practices, visits to their homes, and trips to team activities. Mary Jo shared:

When I was in elementary school, we were part of a dance academy.

Aside from being my teachers, they were also our coaches when we were doing dance. I got to spend a lot of time with them outside of the classroom. They were definitely my favorite teachers because I got to know them because we went to their homes, and got to visit them, and visit their family. It was a different experience there.

She also identified two of her high school teachers who she described as being “adamant in ensuring” that they learned. Mary Jo stated:

In high school, I had amazing teachers. I had amazing teachers because they were just so adamant about ensuring that we learned. I think my favorite teacher was my English teacher. She was just an amazing teacher because she took time. She always wanted to know how your parents were doing and how your family was doing

All four of her favorite teachers were African American women who she describes as all having motherly qualities and a desire to see their students succeed.

Strong Respect for Educators and the Teaching and Learning Process

All participants attributed their early success in education and with their caring teachers as the catalyst for their love of the field and the profession. This is consistent with the findings that strong early school experiences establish a trajectory of achievement seen in later grades which the three of them states they experienced (Lee, Winfield, & Wilson, 1991). Mary regards teachers as the backbone of the country stating:

“I just think that teachers and educators are really the backbone of the country. And, what they do everyday, it’s hard to duplicate.” She considers the role of a teacher as a hard one to replicate and values the contributions educators make to society. She describes it as a position that most people lack understanding and appreciation. She shared: “I think, in general, people just don’t realize how much classroom teachers are given and how much they are responsible for.”

Occupying multiple roles within the field of education to include classroom teacher for five years, with additional years in the roles of lead teacher, assistant principal, principal, and educational consultant, Mary Jo continues to identify with the role of an educator and holds the profession in high regard. She maintained that teachers who genuinely care about the wellbeing of their students, focus on relationship building, and hone their ability to effectively communicate and transfer knowledge will have a major impact on the lives of their students. Mary Jo stated the following to further describe the importance of relationship building in the work she does:

We create a climate and culture in our schools where we are actually able to achieve optimal academic achievement. But, not necessarily focusing purely on academics but understanding the importance of relationship.

She believes that teachers and educational professionals are the bridge builders that connects families and communities and should be valued for their contributions to humanity and supported more in their efforts. Mary Jo believes that the responsibilities of teachers are more prevalent in the day-to-day lives of their students. She credits teachers for their ability to transmit knowledge and information, spark creativity and imagination, guide through difficult life transitions, nurture interests, and provide mentorship

opportunities to help their students unlock their potential. She underscores the instrumental role educators play in the lives of our youth and expresses a strong desire for the profession to protect and support teachers. She postulates:

I feel like our job is important and it should be, you know, there's no reason why teachers should be responsible for everything that we're responsible for at school. And then they have to grade papers and they have to do all of this other stuff, maybe at home because their school may not provide time for them to use their planning period to plan or to grade papers.... We just got to do what we need to do to support teachers and keep them in the classroom.

Personal Desire to Contribute to Humanity, Society, and the Betterment in the Lives of Children and their Families

Teachers whom participants highlighted as being instrumental in cultivating positive experiences, affirming their desire for learning, and nurturing them as individuals embodied what McBer (2000) refers to as teacher effectiveness. The research findings from this study underscores the belief that teachers make a difference in student success. This construct has three main factors which includes classroom climate, teaching skills, and professional characteristics. The key qualities from this research paradigm that the teachers possessed were the models of professional characteristics which includes professionalism; thinking; planning and setting expectations; leading; and relating to others. The common highlighted attributes and abilities that were identified by the participants when describing their teachers are respect; creating trust; showing tough

love; setting expectations; and demonstrating a commitment to their success. Each of them shared the following when reflecting on the teachers in their lives:

Carly- “I had teachers that looked out for me and made sure that I had what I needed to be successful.”

Mary- “She just had this way of making everyone feel incredibly important...and, a part of this classroom community.”

Mary Jo- “They were just so adamant about ensuring that we learned.”

Mary Jo began her service to society as an enlisted soldier in the United States Army stationed at Fort Jackson in South Carolina in the 1980s. By this time Mary Jo was no longer teaching and was engaged in educational consulting. In her late 30s, Mary Jo pursued her education degree while enrolled in night classes at a local college. She underscored her commitment to education by highlighting that she enrolled in a traditional program versus the route most of her military counterparts took through the *Troops to Teachers* initiative. Mary Jo stated the following about her counterparts:

They didn't go through a four-year-program at a college. They went through Troops to Teachers, or they went through some other organization where they didn't even go through a teacher's program. They had a degree and then some kind of organization give them these pieces of information and knowledge, and then they become certified teachers through the non-traditional route. So, they just didn't feel prepared, and so, I thought I'm not going to be able to do this [program].

The *Troops to Teachers* was a new program that was established in 1993, which was the year before she began her formal studies. This initiative was designed to assist

transitioning service members and veterans in beginning new careers as K-12 schoolteachers. This program provides counseling and referral services to help participants meet education and licensing requirements as well as assist them in securing teaching positions. This program has placed more than 100,000 veterans in public, charter, and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools (Troops to Teachers, 2021). Opting not to participate in this program, Mary Jo recounts enrolling in traditional classes during the day on campus, working on the military base in the evenings, and staying up late to complete homework assignments after work and on weekends. Though she did not condemn the common use of the *Troops to Teachers* pathway of entry into the profession, I inferred from her language and vocal tone that she valued more the traditional way of attaining an undergraduate degree from a traditional four-year institution. Mary Jo stated that she desired to earn her teaching credentials in the same manner that certified educators earned theirs and did not want to bypass that process by completing the military alternative certification program. Upon graduating with her elementary education teaching certification, she entered the school system the same year that the state's highest courts declared the legal standard that the Legislators must afford all students a "minimally adequate" education. This 1999 ruling prompted backlash from education advocates due to the dissatisfaction with the educational status quo. Mary Jo described a richer experience with her former teachers who sought to provide more than a minimal educational experience. She had the desire to provide the highest caliber of teaching for her students as well, hence, her dedication and commitment to pursue and attain the degree she believed would provide her the preparation, knowledge, and skillset to achieve that objective. She believed that though the alternative programs had the

potential of preparing teachers, there would often be a disconnect in their performance when they are not prepared in a traditional program. She explained:

So, they're prepared, as far as contextually. But, when it comes to classroom management, when it comes to applications of those things, then it's a totally different scenario. That's why it doesn't lend itself to the retention. Because, they can teach, I mean, the alternative training or alternative certification program has prepared them. They have the capacity; they have the knowledge. Where the disconnect happens, is being able to engage the student population so that then you can communicate the experience and the knowledge, and it be impactful.

Carly cemented her commitment to the betterment of lives of children as a member in the City Year program. She enjoyed the feeling of getting to know the students on a personal level, connecting with them on their common interests, and seeing their excitement to engage in guided activities under her care. When reflecting on her experience with the program, she shared: "When I did City Year...there was a culture that was positive. I enjoyed going there everyday. I felt like people worked together."

In this role as a City Year member, Carly was charged with mentoring students, assisting in one-on-one or small group tutoring, helping students build self-esteem and overcome obstacles, assist teachers with schoolwide activities, as well as assisting the school with environmental challenges their families encounter. She was assigned to her high school alma mater school district (where she matriculated from elementary, middle, and high schools) during her placement, which is where she was eager to begin her teaching career. That was until she began her undergraduate degree pursuit and was

assigned to her practicum teaching experience. She realized half-way through the placement that the expectations she had for the field based on what she encountered as a student and City Year volunteer was vastly different than what she encountered as a teacher intern. Carly expressed that as a volunteer, she was able to work directly with students on their schoolwork and help them improve academically in the areas identified by their teachers. She also developed a great relationship with the students she was assigned to in a mentor capacity. She particularly enjoyed being a part of the community and assisting with school art projects, literacy initiatives, and parent centered events. On the other hand, she began to feel that her teaching preparation and volunteer experiences did not quite prepare her for the demands she encountered as an intern. She quickly became overwhelmed with the increase in the number of responsibilities she experienced as a student teacher intern which included paperwork, meetings, and discipline issues. Due to this mismatch in experiences, Carly began to question her capabilities and desire to complete her academic program and pursue the career profession she declared interest in so many years prior. With a renewed spirit, she completed her degree program, and pursued a career in education. Her first year of teaching, 2016-2017, proved to also be a challenging period for public education in the state. This was consistent with the academic challenges identified in findings by the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee. The 2017 ranking for the fourth-grade reading level on the nation's report card was number 47 and for fourth-grade math it was 43 (based on a range of 1-50, with one being the best and 50 being the worse). These rankings reflected the largest decline with a negative eight slip between the 2005-2017 time period.

Based on Carly's experience, some of this decline could be attributed to teachers feeling unequipped to teach multiple content areas once becoming a first-year teacher. She shared that during her teacher preparation programs, she learned how to write lesson plans in isolation. She was not fully prepared to create and conduct lessons across content areas or how to utilize various content models. She stated: "When learning how to write lesson plans, you learn how to write them in isolation. But, once you enter the profession, each content area had a different model that was required for use in lesson planning."

She indicated that in addition to lack of preparedness, she often felt things were thrown at her causing her to not have the necessary time needed to devote to master the curriculum or subject content. She explained: "I felt like I wasn't supported in, in just trying to grow as a teacher. I feel like, I was kinda behind the eight ball the whole time."

She admitted that the challenges were compounded by her personal need to develop her professional footing and honing her skillset to convey key concepts to her students. She also shared that an additional difficult factor were the various levels of performance and ability among her students. She stated: "Academically, they were low. I had a student in my class, fourth grade, couldn't read or write. Couldn't write his name."

Intersection of Race and Gender as an African American Female Teacher

Knight (2002) explains that intersectionality is the way that race, class, and gender are intertwined and are not experienced as separate categories. For this study, I looked at the intersection of two social identities - race and gender. While analyzing the interview transcripts, I attempt to honor participants' reflections from the lens of their joint identity of being African American and females. In doing that, I found four examples of intersections (Table 4.1). Although there is not enough data to form a theme

across interviews with Carly, Mary, and Mary Jo, I think the points each participant made about their respective experiences as African American women as teacher candidates and teachers are salient.

Table 4.1 **Participant Experiences with Intersectionality**

Participant	Observation
Mary Jo	Required to overperform to achieve high evaluations in comparison to subpar performance by peers
Carly	Lack of preparation from Predominantly White Institutions Serving as representation and mother figures for students
Mary Mary Jo	Higher assignment of students with severe behavioral issues (designated as disciplinarian)
Mary	The desire and need for representation in the school setting

The first observation was having to overperform in undergraduate programs as well as in the profession to produce acceptable work. The second observation was lack of preparation in teacher education program at a PWI to teach African American students. The third observation was the assignment of the most behavioral to African American teachers' issues in comparison to other trained professional peers. The fourth was the desire and need for representation in the school setting.

Expectation of Overperformance

When Mary Jo discussed learning and preparation experiences at the PWI institution she attended during her undergraduate program, she described being the only African American student in her class. She shared an encounter where she would produce what she perceived to be good work, but would always score lower than her peers. She

stated that she then decided to start submitting more work which would be longer in content and exceed the requirements of the rubric. She explained:

We had this assignment. I got a C on the assignment.... This was the time, I think, it dawned on me, that I had to do, twice as much work as everybody else, to get the grades and stuff. So for the next assignment, that's exactly what I did. So, if you ask for eight pages, I'm going to give you twelve. Because that's the only way that person gets an A. Then, that's the only way I'm going to get an A is if I did more than they did. I was the only Black female in the program, in our cohort. And so, that's how I had to work in order to get through the program.

Mary Jo found that when she did that, she was guaranteed the highest grade, but she noted that it was not the expectation or practice of the White students in the class.

Serving as Representation

Carly shared her perspective of being a Black woman in the classroom and profession. She indicated that her role caused her to serve as a mother figure, representation for young Black girls who looked up to her, as well as an example for her racial group. She explained:

Being a Black woman, I feel like a lot of times I have to be a role model for other Black people. Not just children, but just in general. Um, and I have to, you know, I want to teach our Black children that they don't have to be what society tries to define them as.

She continued to illustrate this point with a comment a former student once told her in the school. She shared: “One day, she came up to me, and she was like, “I’ve never had a teacher that loved science as much as you do. It’s so great to see a Black woman like I am.” That’s what she told me.”

Carly also recognized that her race and gender positioned her to serve as a visual representation of a mother figure. She had two students in particular whom she thought of when explaining this concept. She shared that the first student was engaged in extracurricular activities but did not have parents who were in attendance. Carly recalls the student saying “oh my mom couldn’t come so I’m glad you were here.” Carly further explained:

I was seen as like, their mom. Like, one of my students, their mom died the year before. He would have outbursts some days, and some days, he was just like, “I love you”. And, give me ‘I love you’ notes. I would hang it up on the wall.

Representation in the Workplace

Having someone that she could see herself as and receiving mentorship from was extremely important for Mary. She stated that her performance was enhanced during the period of working alongside an African American woman administrator. She shared:

I would say having a Black female as an administrator and as a leader, I think it was a very positive thing for me. And while I think that, she was incredible leader to all, I definitely think that she recognized her influence

as a Black woman and had some level of mentorship to all of the other Black women in the building.

These examples shared from the perspectives of the three participants illustrated different ways the intersection plays on different aspects of the profession. These experiences represented the nuances of being a Black woman as it pertains to the challenges one can face in the undergraduate preparation phase, serving as representation for their students and community, as well as receiving mentorship from who they view as representation.

Motivating Factors for Leaving the Classroom

Drawing from their individual experiences and perspectives, participants each shared several motivating factors that prompted them to leave the profession (see Table 4.2). All three participants expressed concern with students' behavioral issues and demands made on teachers.

Mary reported the financial burden of paying for things out of pocket; constantly being criticized for her work performance, lack of respect from students, parents, and administrators; the demand of the requirements and responsibilities of the profession; student behavioral issues; and lack of support from the community and policymakers. Carly indicated that she experienced: lack of support from administrators and co-workers; behavior issues with students; constantly felt behind with her workload; extreme fatigue and depression resulting in high levels of stress; unhealthy weight loss; excessive crying; toxic school climate; safety concerns in school; weak or strained relationships with the parents of her students; and an ineffective induction transition period.

MaryJo’s case is unique in comparison to the other two participants because she left the classroom due to a promotion versus no longer wanting to work in the profession. As she ascended to Lead Teacher and then to Assistant Principal, she had to deal with a large decline of teachers from the workforce. From her perspective as an administrator, she identified that teachers were poorly equipped by their preparation programs; were unable to meet or otherwise overwhelmed by the demanding expectations; entered without a heart for teaching; behavior issues stemmed from societal issues migrating to schools and classrooms; and were transitioned into leadership roles and positions if they were perceived to be effective teachers.

Table 4.2 Motivating Factors Contributing to Classroom Departure

<i>Mary</i>	<i>Carly</i>	<i>Mary Jo</i>
Financial burden of paying for things out of pocket	Lack of support (from administrators and co-workers)	Groomed for leadership and administrative roles
Constantly criticized	Students’ behavioral issues	
Lack of respect	Constantly feeling behind	
Requirements (responsibilities of the profession)	Extreme fatigue and depression (stress)	
Student behavioral issues	Unhealthy weight loss and crying	
Lack of support (from community and policy makers)	Ineffective induction program (led by district)	
	Weak relationships with parents	
	Toxic school climate	
	Safety concerns	

Collectively, two common issues were identified among the participants: (1) concerns about student misbehaviors; (2) increasing demands given to teachers. Carly and Mary

shared as well negative effects of responding to challenging student behavior and increased demands and responsibilities on their emotional, physical, and/or mental health. Examples of participant's responses are provided in the subsequent sections.

Inability to Manage or Handle Student Behavior

Mary noted that in her role as one of the few African American teachers she was automatically designated the disciplinarian for student behavior issues. She expressed experiencing frustrations with the assumption that she was equipped to handle every challenging student. She explained that there was an expectation that Black women would be better with certain behaviors. She noticed that many times students who exhibited behavioral issues were placed in certain classrooms, and most of the time, those classrooms were with Black teachers or where there was a Black assistant. She recalled having so many students with behavioral issues that she felt like it was perceived that she should be able to handle it. She initially thought she was possibly being oversensitive as a Black woman. However, her observations of African American female teachers getting assigned the most students with severe behavior challenges were confirmed when she approached the school administrator with her concerns and he responded by stating, "It just happens that way." Immediately, she told herself "I cannot just handle it just because I'm a Black woman."

Carly described the constant fatigue of her attempt to manage perceived student misbehaviors. She recalled three students who contributed to disruption in her class on a regular basis. She described how they would engage in mischief behavior and lamented how she exhausted every known tactic to redirect their behavior. She shared an example of an incident .

They would, um, like go to the video, go to the computers and try to play video games while I'm in the middle of teaching. And then it got to the point where I had to unplug the keyboard and the mouse and lock it away in a file cabinet so they would leave it alone. And then, when I did that, then, they, like started messing with the buttons on the keyboard. I mean, buttons on the computer monitor, and try to mess it up. But, it was just, no matter what I tried to do, no matter what the different tactics I tried, it didn't, I couldn't get through to them.

Carly remembered feeling drained and exhausted for extended periods of time and always feeling behind due to the demands of teaching, high workload, on top of trying to manage behaviors. She indicated that she believed some behavior issues stemmed from students' mischievous nature, and some she felt was directly related to their academic performance. She explained that several of her fourth-grade students read below grade level, were not able to keep up with academic expectations, and one student was not able to write his name. Additionally, she recalled one student who acted out in rage because of the grief of his father passing away. She described his tantrums he would have in the classroom, sometimes during lessons, and her being unable to redirect his actions. She stated that his outlash would get so volatile at times that other students would beg to have him removed from the class.

Mary Jo did not personally experience behavior issues with the students in her class. She explains that she had incredible relationships with the children and their parents that prompted them to perform well on school tasks and engage in appropriate behavior that met her classroom expectations. Mary Jo explained:

I think there is a common understanding of what goes on in the classroom and how to properly, um, manage behaviors in the classroom. And so I think my success, um, at being effective at that particular thing when I was a teacher. I think I mentioned earlier, um, that there was probably very few times where I sent kids to the office, but I did, um, what I thought was a good job at building relationships with students and getting to know students.

Though Mary Jo experienced success with behavior as a classroom teacher, as an administrator and as the years passed, she recognized that teacher's inability to manage behavior became a large component of teacher turnover. She believed it stemmed from lack of preparation from their teacher training programs and societal issues that are now in the school and classroom community. She compared three generations of behavior: her peers when she was a school age child; the students she taught; and the children who are in the school system today. She emphasized that she has never, in her entire history in the field, seen students misbehave the way they do now.

I'm not talking about in one place. I'm talking about across this nation. I have been to kindergarten classrooms where kids are throwing chairs. I have been to kindergarten classrooms, where kids are cursing and hitting people and running around the classroom just out of control. So, there are so many different variables, and the things that we have not taken care of as a society, that's now showing up in the classroom.

Overwhelmed from Increased Demands and Responsibilities

In connection with lack of preparation from training programs, Mary Jo speculated that novice teachers were unaware of the expectations and responsibilities of the role once they began teaching. However, she also agrees that the field has drastically changed since she entered the profession, and that additional duties and tasks were added to position. She states:

There's a lot more, um, a whole lot more, in terms of expectations, um, for what it is teachers have to do....Um, but I think some of them, in terms of maybe some of the things that are mandated by school districts, by states, department of education, um, you know. There's not a balance there. So, I think it's so much more difficult to be a schoolteacher. And, I think that's why, for some of our teachers who are coming out of education programs, even if they are wonderful programs, they're ill prepared.... I also think that there are mounting mandates and requirements. Testing.... all of the things that teachers are required to do, um, on top of teaching. Um, and so I think teachers now probably go into teaching with the heart to want to help kids, um, with being just keen on making a difference. Um, and, they get into the field, and they realize that it's so much more than just teaching.

Carly cites this lack of preparation from her undergraduate teacher program coupled with the absence of dedicated time to devote to the craft created an unhealthy cycle of burnout and despair. She recalled beginning the year without guidance or structure for what her roles and responsibilities would be. She remembered attending

training for long periods of the day and then was required to complete follow-up assignments and work without being granted time to prepare for the first day of school. She stated that from the very beginning, she felt behind and unable to actually catch her breath during the short period she was in the classroom.

I left, primarily, because I felt like I wasn't supported in, in just trying to grow as a teacher. And I feel like I was kinda behind the eight ball the whole time.... - There was no, like, team planning. There was no, 'Okay, this is the curriculum, and this is what we are going to do'. There was no, real guidance, in terms of what was expected of me.

Mary shared a similar sentiment in terms of the lack of preparation from her experience as a P-12 student, undergraduate teacher candidate, and student teaching experiences once transitioning into her classroom teaching role.

I definitely think I had a much more, a workload that was much more time consuming. Um, as a teacher. I mean, several, I don't know, 20-30 IEPs a year. Lesson plans, IEP meetings, curriculum changes, requirements with testing, I mean, I had so much to do as a classroom teacher. Definitely more.

Negative Effects on Emotional, Physical, and/or Mental Health

According to Jerrim et al (2020), teachers who leave the profession and transition to another job experienced a large increase in satisfaction with both their career placement, wellbeing, and life overall. Both Carly and Mary found they needed support as new teachers. Neither received any.

Carly became extremely vulnerable as she recounted the troubling period of serving as a classroom teacher. During her time, she experienced the lowest of lows emotionally and mentally while serving in the role that caused other health related issues as well. She stated, “~...basically I had anxiety. I lost 17 pounds within that four-month time. Stress. I didn’t have my menstrual cycle at all during that time.”

She shared that she cried excessively most of that period. So much so, that when approached by one of the school administrators and asked how she was doing, she recalled her reaction and stated: “I just burst out crying and was like, ‘No, I’m not ok. I’m like struggling’”. Not feeling okay, along with minor cold symptoms, prompted her to take a few sick days to rest and recuperate at home. It was then that she was faced with the harsh reality of how miserable she was at her job. She remembered enjoying the peace and stillness of her home. She stated that though she was home with the sniffles and mildly under the weather, she was still far less stressed than any day in her classroom setting. It was then that she came to grips with the need to leave her post.

Mary’s mental and emotional fatigue showed up in a different way. She experienced attacks to her self-esteem and confidence due to the pressure of feeling as if she was unable to measure up and meet expectations. She described the painful experience of always feeling like she was never good enough. Due to societal expectations, school guidelines, professional demands, and evaluation metrics, she felt every indicator pointed at inefficiencies. This caused her to question her viability as an educator and ultimately experience high levels of stress.

Health statistics for people in the teacher profession are daunting. Jerrim, Sims, Taylor, and Allen (2020) conducted a study and discovered several alarming facts pertaining to teachers and their health. They found the following: (1) teachers had the lowest level of psychological wellbeing among a group of 26 different professions; (2) primary teachers had one of the highest levels of work-related stress; (3) teachers felt more tense and worried about their jobs than any other profession; (4) teachers had documented long-term sickness which stemmed from high stress levels; and (5) teachers suffered increased mental health issues as a result of working long hours and increased pressure from system and school accountability measures. These findings were prevalent in the experiences of the three participants of this study.

Recommendations for Retention

During the last interview session, I asked participants to share recommendations they had for retaining more African American women in the teaching profession. Carly recommended higher salaries. Mary recommended mentoring and opportunities for leadership. Mary Jo mentioned mentoring as well, particularly as an important element of retention. She recommended more support for new teachers, early recruitment to teacher education programs and higher retention of African American women. These suggestions further demonstrate their initial observation that teachers do not receive adequate support to maximize success in the teaching profession.

Though research findings suggest that new teachers do not leave the profession for employment with higher salaries (Scafidi, et. al, 2006), Carly recommended giving teachers more pay will give them the resources needed to support their lifestyle without the need for additional employment or part-time jobs.

I think, one, definitely salary. We all know that when you get into teaching, no, you're not going to make a whole lot of money. Like, we know that. But, at the same time, I feel like our job is important and it should be, you know, there's no reason why teachers should be responsible for everything that we're responsible for at school, and, then they have to get another job to keep their apartment or to keep whatever they need to, wherever they live. So, they have to have, like, a lot of different jobs or they rely on summer school or after school to make that extra money. Whereas, it shouldn't have to be necessary for them to have to do that.

She explained further that even if you are “frugal” with earned income, as a teacher, it is still extremely difficult to be able to afford general living expenses, bills, and a home on their salary. She elaborated:

Because I know a lot of my teacher friends that I work with now, they have other jobs. Some of them are servers, some of them work at children's homes, they do things like that, tutoring services or have their own independent companies as well. So, I think, you know, finding a way for teachers to be able to support themselves, is definitely a big one. You know, cause on my salary, I still live with my parents. I had to move back in with my parents because just looking at my bills, and what I have to pay, there is no way for me to be able to afford an apartment. Nobody wants to spend four years in college to do something and not be able to make ends-meet. Even if they are good with their money, cause, I'm

not out there just buying random expensive stuff all the time. Like, I'm literally figuring out how to manage every dollar that I make, and even with that, there is still no way for me to live by myself at this moment.

Rich mentoring experiences for new African American teachers were recommended by Mary to improve retention of that target demographics. Mary stated:

I think the big thing would be, I think I talked about this before, more mentoring opportunities because I think that made just the big difference for me. And more growth opportunities. Because, I think again, with Black women, and you are dealing with a Black woman who is extremely capable and competent, they just want opportunities to have a bigger reach. So, opportunities for them to be leaders, maybe not in administration, but in other ways in school system. And I think in an area where we are underrepresented, we are also, sometimes overlooked for some of those leadership opportunities. So, making sure there are enough opportunities in ways to grow leadership in that community, our community.

Consistent with that notion, Dingus (2008) asserts that mentoring for African American women is critical in shaping their professional practices, assisting them in navigating promotions, maneuvering leadership positions, and their abilities to deal with challenges and racism. Mary addressed all those key findings when she indicated that Black women would benefit from mentors, growth opportunities, and leadership placement.

Hill-Jackson (2020) noted that Black women in the teaching profession remain understudied, and serious attempts to identify, recruit, and retain African American women in the field of education have not materialized. Hill-Jackson (2020) recommended that Special Emphasis Recruiting (SER) is the least used but most effective practice to recruit underrepresented populations. The goal of SER is to improve the representation and recruitment of people of color in the United States workforce.

Mary Jo suggested three areas she thought could be addressed to retain more African American female teachers. She named early recruitment, higher retention in teacher preparation programs, and more support of new teachers.

I think...the recruitment and not just when they're in high school...I think the retention piece, is a piece that we need to look at in terms of our teacher ed programs...I think in terms of the retention, it's how do we put things in place at district levels when we are, um, dealing with, um, those that are coming out of school going into teaching in terms of retaining them. Um, and I think finding out what kind of supports they need, finding out what the teacher education program really prepared them for. Um, and whether or not they're even equipped going into teaching, um, to be able to handle all of the expectations that are placed on them. And so, I think the mentoring piece becomes extremely important in that with teacher retention, and how it is we engage them in that first couple of years in their experience as teachers. Um, and then how it is we support them, from an administrative point, how do we support teachers. Um, no matter where you go across, you know, the country, you're facing some of the same

challenges. And so, I think that retention piece falls on the school district in terms of what kind of supports are in place for new teachers.

Hill-Jackson (2020) indicated two primary reasons for the need to recruit and retain African American female teachers: (1) to serve as role models in classrooms; and (2) to fulfill a moral obligation for teachers to reflect the United States.

Professional Roles Post Teaching

There is a popular theory that new teachers leave the profession for higher paying jobs in alternate occupations. Scafidi, Sjoquist, and Stinebrickner (2006) argue that little is known about where teachers go or what they do when they leave the profession due to limited suitable data studying the issue. However, their research findings suggest that the theory is not an accurate portrayal. They identified that 22% of the new teachers who leave the classroom remain in the field of education in a non-teaching occupation. Additionally, they found that 12% leave to pursue another profession; 9% work outside teaching; and 7% leave for a position with better salary structure or benefits plan. Each of the three participants in this study shared responses that were reflect responses in Scafidi et al's work.

Carly remained in the field of education after leaving the classroom. She became a High School Career Specialist. In this role, she plans classroom lessons, work with students to help them pass a career readiness test, and assist juniors who did not meet the assessment requirements. She also analyzes assessment data to identify sections students need to improve and develop a strategy to assist them in achieving the score needed to pass. Though she oversees 1,000 students in her position, she says that the workload is

less challenging and less stressful than it was as a classroom teacher. She considers it a bonus that she receives the same pay structure as she did when teaching in the classroom.

Mary left the traditional profession and transitioned into a role that is grounded in educational practices and services. She is employed as a Director of Community Engagement of a nonprofit. She works with an organization that serves students who are in high school and are working toward college admissions tests. She helps them prepare for the testing portion of the college admissions process and the application and scholarship research portion. She works with students and their families on putting together competitive applications, completing scholarship research, and identifying funding sources to help them pay for college. She described her role as:

I work with students who are in high school...and, are working towards the competitive college admissions tests. We help them prepare for the testing portion of the college admissions process and also the application and scholarship research portion. We work on putting together the competitive application and also the scholarship research and funding sources to help them pay for college.

She believes that her experience as a classroom teacher relates to her new role and allowed her to seamlessly transition into her community position. This is the second public community service-based entity she has worked in since leaving the teaching profession. She left the previous post to move to another city closer to her newlywed husband's place of work. In both placements, she worked with community volunteers and organizations that serve similar interests. She really enjoys the work pace and the flexible routine that allows her opportunities to network and talk to a lot of people with different

backgrounds. She expressed that unlike when she was in the classroom, she now enjoys tapping into other skillsets, being exposed to many industries through volunteer and donor work, and the opportunity for growth. Mary shared:

I really enjoy that work, and the routine. I kinda get to network, I guess in a sense. Talk to a lot of different kinds of people during the day. I get to tap into a bunch of industries throughout the day through volunteer work and donor work and that kind of thing. So, I really love that aspect of the job and I don't think I did that as much in the classroom. So, I appreciate using a different skillset. I know that there is definitely potential for growth where I am now and that contributes to my overall happiness.

She also stated that her stress level is much lower, she receives more respect by society, and has experienced an overall increase in her personal and professional happiness. Mary explained:

I think the level of stress...I feel like I am able to manage it a lot better in my position now because I think that there is this level of respect for what I do, and level of professional trust and professional responsibility in this new role that I didn't feel in teaching. That all contributes to my overall happiness as well.

Mary further elaborated:

Working for a non-profit...very comfortable environment to work in. I definitely feel a lot more free now. I mean I can go to the bathroom now when I want. I can leave for lunch when I want to. I, you know, I go and talk to a co-worker for a few minutes...between lunch or whatever. I don't

feel like those things are frowned upon as much. Whereas, I think there is this kinda looming feeling in a school where, it's like, if someone doesn't see you working or see you with students, or see you copying, then you're hanging out. You know, you aren't viewed as working as hard. I think it's really interesting that's placed on teachers in a school and it's not placed on most professionals in a professional environment.

This is consistent with Jerrim et al (2020) findings that teachers have lower life satisfaction while in the profession and experienced an increase in job and life satisfaction as well as general wellbeing once they left.

Mary Jo is in her current professional career as an educational consultant, she facilitates trainings around school climate and culture to schoolteachers and school leaders. She is an independent contractor and works with other colleagues around the nation. She believes her classroom teaching experience was very helpful in allowing her to relate to what teachers are doing in the classroom now. She believes it allows her to have a better communication and rapport with teachers because she speaks from the perspective of a teacher and school principal. She now works with students, teachers, and schools across the nation in her consulting capacity. Mary Jo stated:

Some of the experience that I'm using in the work, I already obtained as a teacher and as a school principal, so, that creditability piece is already there because I've been a teacher and I've been a school principal.

She believes this role gives her the opportunity of having a farther reach, touching more lives, and impacting the teaching and learning process for students, families, teachers, and administrator.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I recall the goals of this study and make concluding remarks about the insights I have gained by exploring the life stories and lived experiences of the three African American, female participants who taught in elementary school classrooms for five years or less. I share their sentiments about the importance of Black women teachers. The discussion ends with implications and recommendations for teaching practices, future research, teacher preparation program development, and school level professional support. It is my hope that these implications will assist in the early identification and nurturing of future African American female teachers, effective training in Teacher Preparation Programs, and guidance for school and district level leadership regarding recruitment and retention of Black, female teachers in P-12 schools.

In conducting this research, my aim was to focus on: the experiences of three African American, female teachers in their role as classroom teachers; the intersection of race and gender in their lived experiences; motivating factors that caused them to leave the classroom during their induction period; and their recommendation for recruiting and retaining African American women in the teaching profession from former classroom teachers. This *#Blackfemaleteachersmatter!* study did not assume that: (1) Black, female teachers are the only ones who have a positive impact on students; (2) Black male teachers do not have a significant role in the teaching and learning process; (3) White teachers cannot be impactful and effective teachers for African American students or

students of Color; (4) all Black female teachers are effective with African American students or students of Color; or (5) Black female teachers only benefit African American students or students of Color (Sun, 2018).

To dispel the notion that Black voices, specifically those of Black women, should be overlooked or is not important enough to include in mainstream conversations, I centered the research of teacher turnover, recruitment, and retention around the voices of Black women. In most discussions and research data, findings pertaining to why teachers are leaving the classroom or refrain from entering the profession is based on the experiences of White women (Farinde-Wu, Butler, & Allen-Handy, 2020). However, knowing that African American women are leaving the teaching profession in higher percentages than White women, I thought it was important to hear directly from Black, women teachers as to why they are exiting the field.

While focusing on their stories, their experiences revealed consistency with the findings of the research. Additionally, it also underscored encounters that were unique to the intersection of being a Black woman. In the following sections, I expound on several findings from this study and discuss their relation to the extant literature.

I address first the commonalities that Carly and Mary shared and then note other salient points across all three participants. Carly and Mary both noted (1) a mismatch between teachers' expectations and classroom realities and (2) the lack of attention and support. In particular, Carly addressed (3) the choice between giving back and self-care. I refer to her turning point while on sick leave. Next, I engage with Mary Jo's observation that African American women (4) work harder than their White counterparts.

Mismatch of Expectations and Classroom Realities

For Carly and Mary transitioning into the role of teachers was a challenge. Carly was contending with the process of reconciling the enjoyment she experienced as a student with the challenges she faced as an undergraduate in a teacher preparation program. Mary too had to reconcile her romanticized view of the profession with her reality once entering in the classroom.

Repeatedly, classroom teachers complain about dissatisfaction with the profession. They describe that the workload is more than they expected it to be, lack of support from the school administration, student discipline issues, lack of influence over decision making, and low salary structures (Moore, 2012; Okeke & Mtyuda, 201; Taylor, 2013). Though the expectation for high salaries is not common among teachers who leave the classroom, they do consistently refer to unrealistic expectations regarding the amount of work and responsibilities they have coupled with what many consider to be low pay (Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009). Since preservice teachers are not required to complete all the tasks and responsibilities of classroom teachers, in many cases, they may not be fully aware of what those requirements are. Therefore, once they enter the classroom, they sometimes encounter a disconnect with what they originally expected in comparison with their realities. Likewise, participants in this study were not aware of various duties that would demand so much time such as lunch, car line monitoring, after school activities, evaluations, paperwork, student organizations, faculty meetings, lesson planning, prepping, and other extraneous tasks besides actual instruction.

Lack of Attention and Support

Although Carly and Mary did not address the need for support in their recommendations for retaining African American female teachers, what they shared across our interviews reflected many instances where they described needing support and not receiving it.

Teachers often experience feelings of isolation (Heider, 2005). This isolation is often synonymous with loneliness. Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikahmadi (2016) defined isolation in two components. The first refers to the conditions of the workplace and the lack of opportunities to interact with colleagues. The second is the teachers' perception of their experiences interacting with colleagues. In general, teachers enter the field with the expectation of working alongside others who are passionate about giving to children and serving to enhance their community through the growth and development of their students. What they encounter is teaching alone in their classroom most of the day and using their breaks alone to use the restroom and consume nourishment. Most teachers are not prepared for the three forms of isolation they encounter once in the profession. Egg-crate isolation is the physical separation in their individual classrooms without interaction with other teachers most of the day. Psychological isolation is their mental processing of the disconnect with peers. Adaptive isolation refers to the overwhelming fatigue they experience when attempting to meet the demands individually. Teachers do not expect to experience isolation, separation, and loneliness to this extent.

Carly and Mary reported needing more opportunities to connect with other peers outside of work shift periods of the day such as lunch duty, bus line, or hallway

transitions . For example, Carly had expected at least some team lesson planning. Mary stated that she was lonely and exhausted most of the time while in the profession. This isolation is a strong cause for teacher turnover (Heider, 2005). The lack of interaction with other teachers, and the primary focus on the daunting tasks and overwhelming responsibilities in the classroom proved to be too much and far beyond their expectations.

This isolation and loneliness results in teachers feeling a lack of attention and support in the profession. Heider (2005) explained that mentoring is a powerful tool to combat this problem and to increase retention rates. Four types of mentoring were recommended to support teachers. The first is telemonitoring which focuses on relationship building and connects groups of teachers via a list server. The second is with a veteran teacher during numerous face-to-face interactions. The third is creating novice teacher learning communities which bring together all new teachers to support and encourage each other during face-to-face sessions and email exchanges. The fourth is peer coaching where two to three teachers are paired together to observe each other's teaching practices, share ideas and strategies, discuss, and solve problems, and provide support and comfort to each other. When these mentoring models are implemented, new teachers receive the support, attention, and a spirit of collaboration in a warm communal environment.

Cherovo, Souto-Manning, Lencl, & Chin-Calubaquib (2015) argued that this is necessary to combat the domination of Whiteness that causes isolation for Black teachers in their teacher preparation programs, the course curriculum content, student teacher placement, and ultimately, when they enter into the field in these settings .

Conundrum of Giving Back or Self Care

Carly spoke of constantly crying, losing weight, missing menstruation cycles, and experiencing high levels of stress, and anxiety attacks at the same time as wanting to give even more to her students for them to experience success. The tough decision on whether to put student needs or personal needs first is a common issue among teachers. This hard choice contributes to teachers feeling more tense and worried about professional duties and responsibilities in their positions than any other job (Jerrim, J., Sims, S., Taylor, H., & Allen, R., 2020). For Carly, this came in the form of constantly subjecting herself to conditions that challenged her overall mental and emotional health. When teachers experience burnout and fatigue in the profession, they are faced with the conundrum of who to choose—their students or themselves (Jerrim, J., Sims, S., Taylor, H., & Allen, R., 2020).

Working Harder Than Colleagues

Mary Jo: From the interview responses, the notion of having to work harder than their colleagues showed up in three different ways in participants' experiences. The first way was the need for Black preservice teachers to go above and beyond guidelines to earn the same grades as White students in teacher preparation programs. For example, Mary Jo personally encountered receiving lower grades when her work was consistent with her peers. Her perception was that it was only when she did more research and submitted longer work samples that she would earn the excellent ratings on her work, regardless of the quality of her assignments when it had the same amount of content as her classmates.

Comparatively, as the only Black teacher in her Special Education content area, Mary lamented about getting students with more severe behavioral and learning challenges than her White peers. She conveyed that this practice alone required her to work harder than the other teachers in her grade and content level. Historically and currently, African American teachers are frequently designated as disciplinarians and assigned students with low academic performance. Sandals (2018) further explains that Black teachers are assigned to addressing disciplinary issues, responding to physical requirements, and nurturing psychological needs, primarily for students of Color. It is noted that this designation is compounded with the responsibility of educating their students and ensuring their successful performance on academic performance indicators.

Unfulfilled Desires in the Profession

Overall, teachers are less likely to retire from the profession than educators did in generations past (Scafidi, 2006). Increasingly so, lack of fulfillment in the profession contributes to premature exits (Jerrim, 2020). Both Carly and Mary discussed how they never felt good enough in the work they were doing with the students. They felt they were often criticized and excessively evaluated by school, district, and state level administrators. They did not see a path for upward promotion in their field that would allow them to pursue their other interests and desires while working in a school setting. Their desires included advancing to leadership roles within the school or district outside of serving as an administrator. The ability to work alongside other professionals in a collaborative approach would have been ideal. They did not feel they received support for further growth and development opportunities that would have allowed them to explore other roles within the school or district.

Overwhelming Nature of Societal Challenges

Participants of this study indicated that societal norms are vastly different to what they experienced when they were school-aged children. Mary Jo shared how societal challenges are becoming more present in classroom settings. She explained that when she was matriculating in school, students never raised their voices or engaged in disrespectful behaviors with their teachers. She indicated that in classrooms today, students and parents both engage in disruptive and rude exchanges with teachers and school leadership. She also stated that challenges such as homelessness, food insecurity, incarcerated parents, are more prevalent in the lives of the children which then becomes a part of the classroom community as well. Mary Jo believes these societal challenges overwhelm novice teachers. Carly underscored this sentiment when discussing how one of her students would violently act out in the class due to the grief of losing his father. She felt that she was not equipped to handle the adverse behavior while seeking to conduct her classroom routine.

Lack of Attention and Support

Teachers often experience feelings of isolation (Heider, 2005). This isolation is often synonymous with loneliness. Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikahmadi (2016) defined isolation in two components. The first refers to the conditions of the workplace and the lack of opportunities to interact with colleagues. The second is the teachers' perception of their experiences interacting with colleagues. In general, teachers enter the field with the expectation of working alongside others who are passionate about giving to children and serving to enhance their community through the growth and development of their

students. What they encounter is teaching alone in their classroom most of the day and using their breaks alone to use the restroom and consume nourishment. Most teachers are not prepared for the three forms of isolation they encounter once in the profession. Egg-crate isolation is the physical separation in their individual classrooms without interaction with other teachers most of the day. Psychological isolation is their mental processing of the disconnect with peers. Adaptive isolation refers to the overwhelming fatigue they experience when attempting to meet the demands individually (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikahmadi, 2016). Teachers do not expect to experience isolation, separation, and loneliness to this extent. The three former teachers in this study report needing more opportunities to connect with other peers outside of work shift periods of the day such as lunch duty, bus line, or hallway transitions. This isolation is a strong cause for teacher turnover which coincided with Mary's experience as a teacher (Heider, 2005). She stated that she was lonely and exhausted most of the time while in the profession. The lack of interaction with other adults and being forced to primarily focus on the daunting tasks and overwhelming responsibilities in the classroom proved to be too much and far beyond her expectations.

This isolation and loneliness results in teachers feeling a lack of attention and support in the profession. Heider (2005) explained that mentoring is a powerful tool to combat this problem and increase retention rates of teachers. Four types of mentoring were recommended to support teachers. The first is telemonitoring which focuses on relationship building and connects groups of teachers via a list server. The second is with a veteran teacher during numerous face-to-face interactions. The third is novice teacher learning communities which brings together all new teachers to support and encourage

each other during face-to-face sessions and email exchanges. The fourth is peer coaching where two to three teachers are paired together to observe each other's teaching practices, share ideas and strategies, discuss, and solve problems, and provide support and comfort to each other. When these mentoring models are implemented, new teachers receive the support, attention, and a spirit of collaboration in a warm communal environment. This is necessary to combat the domination of Whiteness that cause isolation for Black teachers in their teacher preparation programs, the course curriculum content, student teacher placement, and ultimately, when they enter into the field in these settings, Cherovo, Souto-Manning, Lencl, & Chin-Calubaquib (2015) postulates that African American teachers face feelings of exclusion which in some instances, also contributes to Black teachers leaving the field.

Implications for the Field of Education

Research indicates that African American women increase the chances of Black students graduating from school and enrolling in college (Farinde-Wu, Griffen, & Young, 2019) which warrants attention to retain them in the profession (Taylor, 2013). Farinde-Wu, Griffen, and Young (2019) offered four recommended suggestions to retain Black female teachers: (1) revising teacher education curriculum to better prepare teacher candidates for their roles and responsibilities in the classroom; (2) offering real-world examples and classroom applications that allows novice teachers to have manageable expectations once entering the profession; (3) expanding the length of teacher training programs; and (4) increasing dedication to the development of socioemotional learning practices to prepare teachers to balance pedagogy and socioemotional needs in the

classroom. Successfully implemented, these recommendations will better prepare, further develop, and fully support African American female teachers.

Implications for Colleges of Education

Recruiting and retaining teachers is a complex issue that heavily involves colleges of education (Farinde-Wu, Griffen, and Young 2019). Research suggests that teacher preparation programs play an important role in the retention of Black, female teachers (Farinde-Wu, Griffen, and Young, 2019; Jackson, 2015). Research findings indicate that teacher preparation programs do not prepare Black, female candidates at the same level as their peers. Several identified factors Black women have in their undergraduate experience caused them to not feel adequately prepared which included isolation, limited course offerings that included relevant coursework, unresponsive professors, absence of cultural support, minimal preparation for diverse school settings, and lack of relevant coursework (Farinde-Wu, Griffen, & Youg, 2019). These factors and others were identified to cause Black women to have low first-time passing rates on certification assessments, higher dismissal rates, and more overall challenges within the program itself. The researchers postulated that when Black female teachers receive more training in pedagogy and teaching methods, engage in more practice instructional time, and receive feedback on their teaching, they were less likely to leave the classroom once they entered. Therefore, the need for better teacher preparation programs for Black teachers were underscored.

Carly, Mary, and Mary Jo all shared a myriad of challenges they encountered in their undergraduate program. Carly and Mary Jo both attended undergraduate PWI institutions where they felt lack of support from professors, harder evaluation measures,

and lack of preparation for diverse settings. Mary, who enrolled in a HBCU, also shared the sentiment of not being fully prepared in her undergraduate program for the demands she would encounter once entering the profession. She stated that her student placement did not have the same challenges with poverty, require her to engage in as many behavior issues, or include the increased demands on her time with tedious tasks and mounds of paperwork.

To combat these issues and to increase the retention rate of African American female teachers, a Black Female Teacher Pipeline (BFTP) is suggested as a potential strategy for solution (Farinde-Wu, Butler, & Allen-Handy, 2020). The BFTP framework includes three levels microlevel, mesolevel, and macrolevel.

Microlevel, also known as the inner circle, represents the first tier of the model. This level includes the experiences of Black girls in K-12 classrooms and often serves as the first exposure to formal teaching with their personal interactions with their teachers. On this level, it is key to expose Black girls to culturally responsive classroom management and deliberate intentional planning. They have to reconcile their personal experiences encountered during their microlevel period of life in their K-12 classroom settings. This period is when they were subjected to disembodied White standards of girlhood and potentially encountered sexist-racist experiences in school. During this phase, they were more likely to be overly punished and accused of being disrespectful and defiant. Additionally, they were grossly underrepresented in their curriculum and not culturally validated through instructional practices. Each of the participants in this study were directly impacted and inspired to enter the profession due to their engagement with their K-12 teachers.

The second tier is the area of focus which is the Mesolevel. This level represents teacher education programs and other institutional entities such as schools and districts. The Mesolevel reveals an overwhelming presence of whiteness in teacher education programs and insists that universities consider racial diversity when developing curriculum and instructional materials. The researchers argued that Colleges of Education programs should develop and include critical teaching competencies through the connection between institutional norms and individual values. They should ascribe value to Black women's ways and refrain from marginalizing or suppressing their cultural experiences. Instead, their cultural values, knowledge, and practices should be integrated and included in the curriculum to ensure increased visibility, appreciation, and respect. When the matriculate to the mesolevel of their teacher preparation program, they often times, encounter the same lack of representation in the curriculum, but now also in the career preparation courses. (Farinde-Wu, Butler, and Allen-Handy, 2020).

Macrolevel is the third tier of the model which represents society. This level focus on the complex nature of gendered racism. It tackles the beliefs that others have about African American women pertaining to their teaching potential, ability to lead and govern, professional capacity, and overall expertise. When they transition into the macrolevel of their professional institution where they have their capabilities questioned, experience gendered racism, and encounter disproportionate opportunities for career growth and advancement (Farinde-Wu, Butler, and Allen-Hady, 2020).

Implications for African American Female Teachers

Boutte (2018) asserted the importance of understanding the cultural backgrounds of ourselves as educators and the students is a crucial component of becoming an

effective educator. I agree with that assertion and believe that African American women entering the profession are tasked with navigating a complex set of circumstances as both preservice teachers and novice teachers.

Boutte (2017) suggested that an overemphasis has been placed on what is wrong with Black students, families, and communities. She recommended that the focus should shift to building on existing strengths that exist among Black people and institutions. Her research recommends four actions that should be taken to systematically address issues of equity: develop an understanding of oppression to teach for social justice and equity; focus on seeing Black strengths and funds of knowledge in students' cultures, communities, and families; challenge educators to understand their own as well as their student's multiple social identities; and participate in ongoing professional development.

The University of South Carolina's Department of instruction and teacher education in the College of Education created the Urban Education Cohort to address the suggested actions referenced above (Wynter-Hoyte, Muller, Bryan, Boutte, & Long, 2019). This program includes a multi-level approach to addressing all the listed factors that fails to prepare and validate the experiences of African American female teachers. The cohort includes five public school partners, five full time faculty members, and 25 undergraduate students (both Black and White). Teachers and preservice students collectively participate in year-round full and half-day in-service workshops; biweekly professional study groups; tailored sessions at conferences; and teachers receive onsite support in the classrooms. The students complete the same courses as their other peers in the college, however, with a primary focus on issues of educational equity in terms of race, ethnicity, class, language, gender identification, religion, and sexual orientation.

Though this offering is not limited to only on cultural group and is designed for all teachers of all backgrounds to enroll and be better prepared to work in diverse and urban settings, it is specifically beneficial for Black teachers to participate in this specialized program. As several students reflected on their personal experiences as students enrolled in this program, the following statements resonated with me as powerful testimonials to the need and lasting impact of this program and others that include similar components. Though the racial background of the three students who made these remarks are unknown, the sentiment speaks volumes for Whites and even more so if they are Black.

I can't pick a course or experience that didn't make me feel brand new and special.

I now advocate for fellow students and women like myself to become strong and able to speak up.

...I cannot express my gratitude for the love and the experiences I have had. I want to relive your teachings in my classroom.

Implications for Educators and the Teaching Profession

The teaching force has declined because of social issues, increased frustration of teaching staff, lower enrollment in teacher preparation programs, and more career profession options (Taylor, 2013). The field of education not only has a teacher shortage, but it also has fewer teachers staying in the profession until retirement age (Aragon, 2016) causing a younger, more unstable, and less secure work force. Therefore, the need to address turnover and strategies to enhance recruitment efforts are dire (Taylor, 2013). The highest percentage of turnover exists among the African American, female population. If their concerns and needs are addressed and met, it will in turn, enhance the

experience for all educators and improve the field of education overall (Farinde-Wu, Griffen, & Young, 2019). This concept is based on the notion that when the least cared for, also considered the most vulnerable, population has their needs met, the realities for everyone is enhanced (Farinde-Wu, Butler, & Allen-Handy, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2019).

Implications for Further Research

The voices of women, particularly women of Color, are often left out of academic research. Our stories and experiences are frequently ignored and are subjected to scrutiny when shared. To extend the conversation, researchers should further explore lived experiences of Black female teachers (past, present, and recently removed). They should conduct more studies that capture the voices of African American females along the continuum of public education pre-dating to the integration period up to present day to further document their historic contributions and enduring legacy in the field of education (Farinde-Wu, Butler, & Allen-Handy, 2020; Foster, 1997).

The next research consideration should include a deeper understanding of how African American women have been impacted by the micro, meso, and macro levels. In doing this, Black girls should have increased exposure to the field of teaching during their primary years (microlevel) to determine if they have early interest in the profession. If they express interest during this stage, they should be offered opportunities to further nurture their skills and prepare them if they decide to enter the field. Black women should be provided with bridge experiences between their undergraduate teacher preparation program and their induction program (mesolevel). This could involve a summer intensive to give them time to get acclimated to their school climate and culture, organize their

classroom space, have guided support in developing initial routines and lessons, meet with parents and students on a staggered schedule to establish rapport, and become comfortable as they embark on their new personal and professional life journey. Black women should be provided with ongoing and research-based training that includes culturally relevant practices, workshops, and professional development programs that will nurture and hone their abilities while also affirming their capabilities and contributions (Farinde-Wu, Butler, & Allen-Handy, 2020).

Additional research on teacher preparation programs should also be investigated. Components for consideration should include efforts that support African American females navigating their teacher preparation programs and successfully transitioning into teaching careers. Suggestions include recommendations to: provide more time for skill development; engage in comprehensive and systematic changes with the implementation of multiple courses with culturally relevant pedagogy; infuse more on-the-job training and simulations to provide increased opportunities for real world training; incorporate more emphasis on socioemotional learning aspects with pedagogy; include ongoing practice in high-quality urban settings; and incorporate regular opportunities to examine personal assumptions and dispositions (Boutte, 2012; Boutte, 2018; Taylors, 2013). The flagship research institution, the University of South Carolina's College of Education, offers an exemplary model in the Urban Cohort program. This program not only includes all of these components, but it also provides ongoing support by creating REACH (Race, Equity, and Advocacy, in Childhood Education) which is a companion student led organization that provides opportunities to engage in conversations that focus on race and racism in schooling and society. These discussions focus on local and national events,

features invited speakers, and includes video content (Wynter-Hoyte, K., Muller, M., Bryan, N., Boute, G., & Long, S., 2019). Combined with the components of the program, teachers, Black teachers especially, leave better prepared for their classroom professions.

Conclusion

This study began by highlighting the disproportionate attention given to Black voices in research, literature, and policy discussions. To honor those voices while also provide insight into the ongoing issue of teacher turnover and retention, I positioned the experiences of three African American women as the focal point. To conclude this study, I present the meaning of #BlackFemaleTeachersMatter in the participants perspectives.

When posed the question, “*What does the phrase “#blackfemaleteachersmatter” mean to you?*”, the participants expressed their pride of belonging to a group that they passionately believe nurture and prepare students to achieve. They shared the ways they think African American women contribute to the field and the need for them to be valued and supported in their roles.

Mary stated. It means, representation. It means a certain cultural awareness that we bring to schools and to the system. Honestly, a level of competency and care for students that I think Black female teachers overall seem to have. A great grasp of the concepts that they’re teaching while being extremely caring and nurturing. I think Black female teachers just bring a much-needed perspective to schools.

Carly stated. I think it means that we need to care for our teachers. Specifically, our Black female teachers. Because, I feel like at times we may be taken for granted. I think we need to really look at why teachers leave the classroom and make changes and advocate for teachers. Even though I’m no longer a certified teacher, I still speak up for

teachers and I still support teachers, and I still do my best to look out for them. I use my story as awareness. That's why I wrote the blog post. I wanted people to know—this is the reality; this is what I went through. I want to find a way to support teachers. I want people to read it and see this is a real problem and we need to figure out what we can do to make it better for teachers.

Mary Jo stated. I think it means that the Black female teacher is needed. I wouldn't say far more than any teacher, but I would say that the impact that a Black female teacher has matters. Because we can give students something that an African American male can't, um, and certainly not a teacher of another race. So, I think we kind of bring something unique to the table. I'm not saying, you know, that all teachers are not compassionate, and all teachers are not nurturing, but I do think that there is, and I can't find the word, but something unique about the Black female teacher and the way that we inspire students. The way that we pour into students.

The onus is on teacher preparation programs and school and district leadership to ensure that our future generation of Black teachers are aware of their worth and how much their nurturing care and ability to reach and teach all children has a significant impact on the success of their students, specifically students of color. We, as African American women, deserve to know our history; how we enhance the teaching and learning process for all children; and should have our value recognized, talent nurtured, and voices and stories heard. This study believes that #BlackFemaleTeachersMatter!

References

- Adriansen, H.K. (2012). Timeline interviews: A tool for conducting life history research. *Qualitative Studies*, 3(1), 40-55.
- Ahinstein, B., Ogawa, R. T., Sexton, D., & Freitas, C. (2010). Retaining teachers of color: A pressing problem and a potential strategy for “hard-to-staff” schools. *Review of Educational Research*, 80(1), 71-107.
- Aragon, S. (2016). *Teacher shortages: What we know*. Education Commission of the States. <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Teacher-Shortages-What-We-Know.pdf>
- Baker, S. (2011). Pedagogies of protest: African American teachers and the history of the civil rights movement, 1940–1963. *Teachers College Record*, 113(12), 2777-2803.
- Barnes, G., Crowe, E., & Schaefer, B. (2007). *The Cost of Teacher Turnover in Five School Districts: A Pilot Study*. National Commission on Teaching and American’s Future. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497176.pdf>
- Bell, D. A. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. Basic Books.
- Berry, R. & Cook, E. (2019). *Critical Race Perspectives on Narrative Research in Education*:

- Centering Intersectionality. In J. DeCuir-Gunby, T. Chapman, & P. Shutz (Eds.), *Understanding Critical Race Research Methods and Methodologies Lessons from the Field* (pp. 86-96). Taylor and Francis.
- Bertaux, D., & Kohli, M. (1984). The life story approach: A continental view. *Annual review of sociology*, 10(1), 215-237.
- Black Past (2007). (1832) Maria W. Stewart, "Why Sit Ye Here and Die". Retrieved from <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1832-maria-w-stewart-why-sit-ye-here-and-die/>
- Blumenfeld-Jones, D. (1995). Fidelity as a criterion for practicing and evaluating narrative inquiry. In J.A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 25-35). The Falmer Press.
- Boe, E. E., Cook, L. H., & Sunderland, R. J. (2008). Teacher turnover. Examining exit attrition, teaching area transfer, and school migration. *Exceptional Children*, 75(1), 7-31.
- Bonilla, Y., & Rosa, J. (2015). #Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States. *American Ethnologist*, 42(1), 4-17.
- Boser, U. (2014). *Teacher Diversity Revisited: A New State-by-State Analysis*. Center for American Progress. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED564608.pdf>
- Boutte, G. S. (2016). *Educating African American students: And how are the children?*. Routledge.

- Boutte, G., Johnson, G. L., Wynter-Hoyte, K., & Uyoata, U. E. (2017). Using African Diaspora literacy to heal and restore the souls of young Black children. *International critical childhood policy studies journal*, 6(1), 66-79.
- Brah, A., & Phoenix, A. (2004). Ain't IA woman? Revisiting intersectionality. *Journal of international women's studies*, 5(3), 75-86.
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Harvard University Press.
- Buchanan, J. D. (2009). Where are they now? Ex-teachers tell their life-work stories. *Issues in educational research*, 19(1), 1-13.
- Butchart, R. E. (2007). Remapping Racial Boundaries: Teachers as Border Police and Boundary Transgressors in Post-Emancipation Black Education, USA, 1861–1876. *Paedagogica historica*, 43(1), 61-78.
- Candela, A. G. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(3), 619-628.
- Carlson, J. A. (2010). Avoiding traps in member checking. *Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1102-1113.
- Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (2016). *South Carolina Teacher Turnover Rates, by District*.
http://www.cerra.org/uploads/1/7/6/8/17684955/teacherturnover_15-16_5yr.pdf
- Chang, M.-L. (2009). An Appraisal Perspective of Teacher Burnout: Examining the Emotional Work of Teachers. *Educational Psychology Review*, (21)3, 193-218.

- Chang, M.-L., & Davis, H. A. (2009). Understanding the role of teacher appraisals in shaping the dynamics of their relationships with students: Deconstructing teachers' judgments of disruptive behavior/students. In P. A. Schutz & M. Zembylas (Eds.), *Advances in teacher emotions research*. (pp. 95-127). Springer.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). *Walking the road: Race, diversity, and social justice in teacher education*. Teachers College Press.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). Gender, black feminism, and black political economy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 568(1), 41-53.
- Coulter, C. A., & Smith, M. L. (2009). The construction zone: Literary elements in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38 (8), 577-590.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics, *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: 8(1).
<http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *Doing what matters most: Investing in quality teaching*. National Commission on Teaching & America's Future.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED415183.pdf>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers; Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 6-13.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2007). Race, inequality and educational accountability: The irony of 'No Child Left Behind'. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(3), 245-260.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). Research on teaching and teacher education and its

- influences on policy and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 45(2), 83-91.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2020). Accountability in teacher education. *Action in Teacher Education*, 42(1), 60-71.
- Dhunpath, R. (2000). Life history methodology: "Narradigm" regained. *International Journal of qualitative studies in education*, 13(5), 543-551.
- Farinde-Wu, A. (2018). # Blackwomenatwork: Teaching and retention in urban schools. *The Urban Review*, 50(2), 247-266
- Farinde-Wu, A., Allen, A., & Lewis, C. W. (2016). Retaining Black teachers: An examination of Black female teachers' intentions to remain in K-12 classrooms. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 49(1), 115-127.
- Farinde-Wu, A., Griffen, A., & Young, J. (2020). Black Female Teachers on Teacher Preparation and Retention. *The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education's Online Urban Education Journal*.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2003). What new teachers need to learn. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 25- 29.
- Foster, M.(1997). *Black teachers on teaching*. New Press.
- Foster, M. (1993b). Black American Women Teachers. *Feminism and Social Justice in Education: International Perspectives*, 101.
- Garcia, E. & Weiss, E. (2019). *The Role of Early Career Supports, Continuous Professional Development, and Learning Communities in the Teacher Shortage: The Fifth Report in "The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market" Series*. Economic Policy Institute, epi.org/164976.

- Gist, C. D. (2018). Human resource development for racial/ethnic diversity: Do school systems value teachers of color?. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 20(3), 345-358.
- Gladwell, M. (2016). Revisionist history. podcast, <http://revisionisthistory.com>.
- Glennie, E. J., Mason, M., & Edmunds, J.A. (2016). Retention and satisfaction of novice teachers: Lessons from a school reform model. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 4(4), 244-258.
- Goodley, D. (2004). Ethnography: a teaching resource. Retrieved August, 4, 2010.
- Grace-Williams, M. D. (2016). " All the trappings of racism are here, and I live in them": Resistance, counterspace, and identity socialization as Afro-Caribbean women raise second generation immigrant sons and grandsons in a racialized US southeastern state (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina).
- Greenberg, J., Walsh, K., & McKee, A. (2014). *2014 Teacher Prep Review- A review of the nation's teacher preparation programs*. National Council on Teacher Quality. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED545343.pdf>
- Griffin, A., & Tackie, H. (2016, November 3). *Through our eyes: Perspectives and reflections from black teachers*. The Education Trust. <https://edtrust.org/resource/eyes-perspectives-reflections-black-teachers/>
- Grissom, J. A., & Redding, C. (2016). Discretion and disproportionality: Explaining the underrepresentation of high-achieving students of color in gifted programs. *AERA Online*, 2 (1), 1–15.
- Hampton, H. (1986). *Eyes on the Prize* [PBS video series]. Blackside Production, Boston.

- Hudson, M. J., & Holmes, B. J. (1994). Missing teachers, impaired communities: The unanticipated consequences of Brown v. Board of Education on the African American teaching force at the precollegiate level. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 63(3), 388-393.
- Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & May, H. (2012). Retaining teachers: How preparation matters. *Educational Leadership*, 69(8), 30-34.
- Irvine, J. J. (1989). Beyond role models: An examination of cultural influences on the pedagogical perspectives of Black teachers. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 66(4), 51-63.
- Jackson, T., & Kohli, R. (2016). Guest Editors' Introduction: The State of Teachers of Color. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 49(1), 1-8.
- Jerrim, J., Sims, S., Taylor, H., & Allen, R. (2020). How does the mental health and wellbeing of teachers compare to other professions? Evidence from eleven survey datasets. *Review of Education*, 8(3), 659-689.
- Jordan-Zachery, J. S. (2007). Am I a black woman or a woman who is black? A few thoughts on the meaning of intersectionality. *Politics & Gender*, 3(2), 254-263.
- King, J. (1991). Dysconscious Racism: Ideology, Identity, and the Miseducation of Teachers. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 60(2), 133-146. doi:10.2307/2295605
- Kumar, R. (2014). *Research Methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. Teachers College Press encounter. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 39(5), 117.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995a). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American*

- Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995b). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995c). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 206-214.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2019, Jan. 15). *Keeping the Dream: Culturally Sustaining Teaching and Learning*. Equity in Education 2019 Conference, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, United States.
- Lash, M., & Ratcliffe, M. (2014). The journey of an African American teacher before and after Brown v. Board of Education. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 83(3), 327-337.
- Lazar, A. & Sharma, S. (2016). "Now I Look at All the Kids Differently": Cracking Teacher Candidates' Assumptions about School Achievement in Urban Communities. *Action in Teacher Education*, 38(2), 120-136.
- Lee, V. E., Winfield, L. F., & Wilson, T. C. (1991). Academic behaviors among high-achieving African-American students. *Education and Urban Society*, 24(1), 65-86.
- Love, Bettina (2014). "I See Trayvon Martin": What Teachers Can Learn from the Tragic Death of a Young Black Male. *The Urban Review*, 46, 292-306.

- Mayorga, E., & Picower, B. (2018). Active solidarity: Centering the demands and vision of the Black Lives Matter movement in teacher education. *Urban Education*, 53(2), 212-230.
- McBer, H. (2000). A model of teacher effectiveness. Department for Education and Employment. Recuperado el, 15, 01-06.
- Milner, H. R. (2003). Teacher reflection and race in cultural contexts: History, meanings, and methods in teaching: *Theory into Practice*, 42(3), 173-180.
- Milner, H.R. & Howard, T.C. (2004) Black teachers, Black students, Black communities, and Brown: Perspectives and insights from experts. *Journal of Negro Education*, 285-297.
- Milner, H.R. (2006a). The promise of Black teachers' success with Black students. *The Journal of Educational Foundations*, 20(3/4), 89.
- Milner, H.R. (2006b). Preservice teachers' learning about cultural and racial diversity: Implications for urban education. *Urban Education*, 41(4), 343-375.
- Milner, H.R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher*, 36(7), 388-400.
- Morris, M. (2016). Protecting Black Girls. *Educational Leadership*, 74(3), 49-53.
- Mosely, M. (2018). The Black Teacher Project: How Racial Affinity Professional Development Sustains Black Teachers. *The Urban Review*, 50(2), 267–283.
- Murnane, R. J., & Steele, J. L. (2007). What is the problem? The challenge of providing effective teachers for all children. *The future of Children*, 15-43.
- O'Brine, C. R., & Kritsonis, W. A. (2008). Segregation through Brown v Board of

- Education: A Setback or Landmark Case. *Online Submission*, 5(1).
- Patton, L. D., Crenshaw, K., Haynes, C., & Watson, T. N. (2016). Why We Can't Wait: (Re) Examining the Opportunities and Challenges for Black Women and Girls in Education (Guest Editorial). *The Journal of Negro Education*, 85(3) 194-198.
- Peterson, K. & Deal, T. (1998). How Leaders Influence the Culture of Schools. *Educational Leadership*, 56(1). 28-31.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J.A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5-23), The Falmer Press.
- Redding, C., & Henry, G. T. (2019). Leaving school early: An examination of novice teachers' within-and end-of-year turnover. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(1), 204-236.
- Ross, K. M., Nasir, N. I. S., Givens, J. R., de Royston, M. M., Vakil, S., Madkins, T. C., & Philoxene, D. (2016). "I do this for all of the reasons America doesn't want me to": The organic pedagogies of Black male instructors. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 49(1), 85-99.
- Scafidi, B., Sjoquist, D.L., & Stinebrickner, T.R. (2006). Do teachers really leave for higher paying jobs in alternative occupations? *Advances in Economic Analysis & Policy*, (1).
- Skachkova, P. (2007). Academic careers of immigrant women professors in the US. *Higher Education*, 53(6), 697-738.

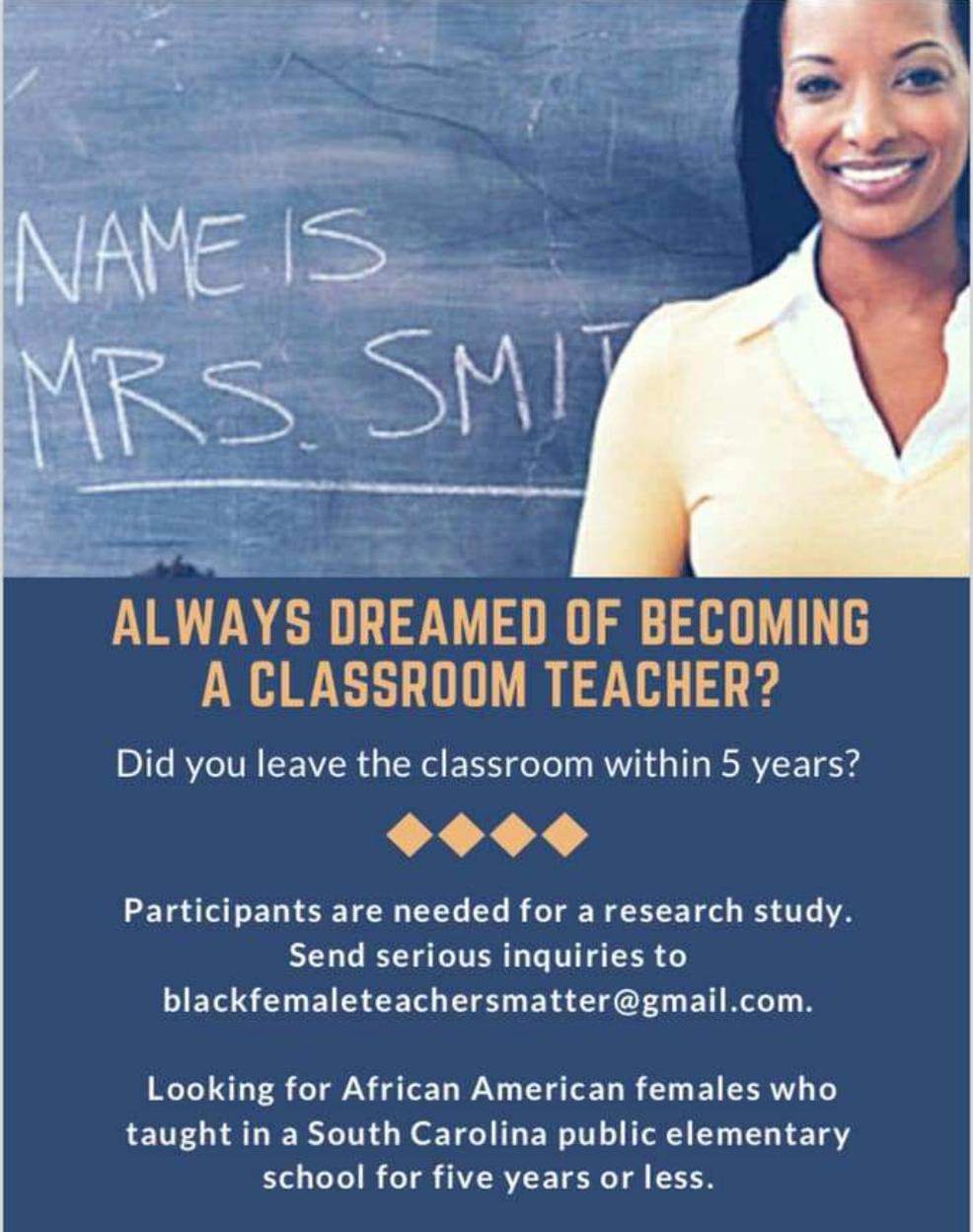
- Solórzano, D. G. & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1). 23-44.
- Souto-Manning, M., & Cheruvu, R. (2015). Challenging and Appropriating Discourses of Power: Listening to and Learning from Early Career Early Childhood Teachers of Color. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 49(1), 9-26.
- Stache, L. C. (2015). Advocacy and political potential at the convergence of hashtag activism and commerce. *Feminist Media Studies* 15(1) 162-164.
- Supreme Court of the United States (1896). U.S. Reports: Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537. [Periodical] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep163537/>.
- Sun, M. (2018). Black Teachers' Retention and Transfer Patterns in North Carolina: How Do Patterns Vary by Teacher Effectiveness, Subject, and School Conditions? *AERA Open*, 4(3), 1-23.
- Tagg, S. K. (1985). Life story interviews and their interpretation. The research interview: Uses and approaches, 163-199.
- Taylor, J. L. (2013). The power of resilience: A theoretical model to empower, encourage and retain teachers. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(35), 1.
- U.S. department of Education. (2016). *The state of racial diversity in the educator workforce*. <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversityworkforce.pdf>

- Vickery, A. (2017). "You excluded us for so long and now you want us to be patriotic?": African American Women Teachers Navigating the Quandary of Citizenship, *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 45(3) 318-348, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2017.1282387>
- Walker, A. (2011). *The color purple* (Vol. 1). Open Road Media.
- Walker, V. S. (2013). Ninth annual Brown lecture in education research: Black educators as educational advocates in the decades before Brown V. Board of Education. *Educational Researcher*, 42(4), 207-222.
- Warren, C. J. E. (1954). Brown v Board of Education. *United States Reports*, 347(1954), 483.
- Watlington, E., Shockley, R., Guglielmino, P., & Felsher, R. (2010). The high cost of leaving: An analysis of the cost of teacher turnover. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(1), 22-37.
- Will, M. (2016). Black teachers feel pigeonholed on the job, reports say. *Education Week*, 36(13), 7.
- Williams, D. G., & Evans-Winters, V. (2005). The burden of teaching teachers: Memoirs of race discourse in teacher education. *The Urban Review*, 37(3), 201-219.
- Windsong, E. A. (2018). Incorporating intersectionality into research design: An example using qualitative interviews. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 21(2), 135-147.
- Winn, M. (2010). 'Our side of the story': moving incarcerated youth voices from margins to center. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 13(3), 313-325.

- Wynter-Hoyte, K., Muller, M., Bryan, N., Boutet, G., & Long, S. (2019). Dismantling Eurocratic Practices in Teacher Education: A Preservice Program Focused on Culturally Relevant, Humanizing, and Decolonizing Pedagogies.
- Yang, G. (2016). Narrative agency in hashtag activism: The case of #BlackLivesMatter. *Media and Communication, 4*(4), 13.
- Yesil Dagli, U. (2012). America's Public School Kindergarten Teachers' Job Turnover and Associated Factors. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 12*(4), 3121-3134.
- Zamudio, M., Russell, C., Rios, F., & Bridgeman, J. L. (2011). Critical race theory matters: Education and ideology. Routledge.

APPENDIX A

Participant Announcement Flyer



**NAME IS
MRS. SMIT**

**ALWAYS DREAMED OF BECOMING
A CLASSROOM TEACHER?**

Did you leave the classroom within 5 years?

◆◆◆◆

Participants are needed for a research study.
Send serious inquiries to
blackfemaleteachersmatter@gmail.com.

Looking for African American females who
taught in a South Carolina public elementary
school for five years or less.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Teachers

Interview 1—Hobbies; personal; teaching demographics; other family members or friends who are teachers; why the teaching profession, etc.

1. Where are you from? What age range are you—21—25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 40-older?
2. What schools did you attend? (Where are these located?) Discuss your P-12 school experiences including favorite subjects, events, teachers, etc.
3. Tell me about your background?
4. What fond memories do you have about your childhood?
5. What level of education have you attained?
6. Why did you go into the teaching profession?
7. Are there other family members and friends who are teachers? If yes, did this influence your choice to teach and/or to leave? Why or why not?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add or would like for me to know?

Interview 2—Teaching experiences and reasons for leaving

1. Have you thought of anything you would like to add since the previous interview session?
2. When did you decide that you wanted to be a classroom teacher? Why did you want to be a teacher?
3. *What eventually led you to leave?

4. *What view of teaching did you have before you entered your teacher preparation program? The profession? Now?
5. What grade level(s) did you teach?
6. Please share information on the racial and social class demographics of the
 - a. a. students,
 - b. teachers,
 - c. and administratorsat your school.
7. * How long did you envision yourself teaching? How long did you teach?
8. Did anything surprise you about teaching? If so, what?
9. Please share memorable experiences that you had while in your school(s) and district(s). Successes. Challenges.
10. Which factors contributed to your decision to leave the classroom?
11. Discuss the preparation you had to become a classroom teacher?
12. *To what extent did your expectations coincide with the reality of teaching for you in the early years?
13. *As you look back on your decision to leave, how did you feel? What thoughts were going through your mind?
14. *Is there anything that would/could have kept you in the teaching profession?

15. What did you learn about teaching that you wish you would have known prior to entering the field/classroom?
16. What role (if any) do you think your gender played a role in your experiences in the teaching profession?
17. What role (if any) do you think your race played a role in your experiences in the teaching profession?
18. How (if at all) did the interaction of your gender and race play in your experiences in the teaching profession?
19. Research findings suggest that among teacher turnover, African American females account for the highest percentage. What do you think about that finding?
20. Is there anything else you would like to add or would like for me to know? Would you like to submit any journal entries, sample lessons, or other artifacts?

Interview 3—What they are doing now and reflections on teaching.

1. Have you thought of anything you would like to add since the previous interview session?
2. Are you still in the field of education?
3. *What are you doing now? To what extent (if at all) do you use the skills and knowledge you gained in teaching in your current work?
4. *How would you compare your teaching work to your current work in the following areas: Salary? Workload? Responsibility? Working conditions? Prestige of job?
5. What does the phrase “#blackfemaleteachersmatter” mean to you?

6. Do you have thoughts and recommendations for retaining African American female teachers?
7. Do you know any other African American female teachers who left the classroom within five years? Do you mind asking if they would be interested in participating in this survey?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add or would like for me to know?

*Denotes questions provided by (or adapted from) the Protocol interview used by Buchanan (2009).

APPENDIX C

Participant Interview Schedule

Participant	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Mary	Date March 5, 2020 Start Time 7:21 pm Duration 32:54	Date March 20, 2020 Start Time 11:00 am Duration 1:17:00	Date April 13, 2020 Start Time 12:34 pm Duration 30:08
Carly	Date April 2, 2020 Start Time 2:08 pm Duration 38:36	Date April 6, 2020 Start Time 6:02 pm Duration 1:51:00	Date April 13, 2020 Start Time 3:30 pm Duration 31:38
Mary Jo	Date April 14, 2020 Start Time 8:02 pm Duration 39:56	Date April 16, 2020 Start Time 3:05 pm Duration 2:23:26	Date April 19, 2020 Start Time 2:11 pm Duration 35:44

APPENDIX D

School Year	Black Female	White Female	Total Staff
2017-2018	6,257.5	32,068.1	50,867.3
2016-2017	6,215.8	31,873.3	50,438.8
2015-2016	6,062.3	31,715.8	49,922.2
2014-2015	5,953.7	31,315.9	49,167.3
2013-2014	5,921.0	31,032.8	48,628.2
2012-2013	5,876.1	30,542.9	47,893.9
2011-2012	5,858.5	30,138.7	47,311.6
2010-2011	5,681.6	29,494.4	46,247.3
2009-2010	6,078.6	30,524.6	48,257.7
2008-2009	6,254.5	30,989.3	49,330.5