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Black Female Educator Retention: Exploring Conditions Needed to Thrive

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by

Carol Eleze Ford Battle

Committee in charge:

University of California San Diego

Professor Amanda Datnow, Chair
Professor Sherice Clarke

California State University, San Marcos

Professor Joni Kolman

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all my ancestors who were not given the opportunity to achieve what was destined for them. And, it is for them, I move forward and continue to blaze a trail for those who follow me. I would especially like to thank my father, Charles Edward Ford, my angel in heaven, and my mother, Carolyn Eli Ford, my angel on earth, for lifting me up every step of the way. You have always been my greatest, most loyal supporters and I know had it not been for you and your prayers, I would not be the woman I am today.

EPIGRAPH

"Your ancestors took the lash, the branding iron, humiliations and oppression because one day they believed you would come along to flesh out the dream." - Maya Angelou

"We have to talk about liberating minds as well as liberating society." - Angela Davis

"I write for those women who do not speak, for those who do not have a voice because they were so terrified, because we are taught to respect fear more than ourselves. We've been taught that silence would save us, but it won't." - Audra Lorde

"Education can't save us. We have to save education." - Bettina Love

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I would also like to acknowledge JDP Cohort 16. We made it through countless obstacles, including a once in a 100 years pandemic and waves of injustice. Yet we pushed, pulled and dragged each other along the way. I'm proud to go through this journey with you.

VITA

2022	Doctor of Education, University of California San Diego and California State University, San Marcos *Janet Hageman Chrispeels Doctoral Fellow*
2021-present	Multiple Subjects Program Manager, San Diego Teacher Residency
2021-present	Lecturer, California State University San Marcos
2007-2021	Teacher, Poway Unified School District
2018-2020	Distinguished Teacher in Residence, California State University, San Marcos
2007	Master of Arts, National University
2002-2007	Teacher/Administrator, California Virtual Academy
2006	California Professional Clear Multiple Subject Teaching Credential
1996-2000	Teacher, Round Rock Independent School District
1997	Texas Professional Multiple Subject Teaching Credential
1993	Bachelor of Arts, University of California Santa Barbara

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

Carol Eleze Ford Battle

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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Professor Amanda Datnow, Chair

Although historical to present day data show that Black female teachers make a significant impact on all students, this group, already underrepresented in the profession, leave teaching at higher rates than their counterparts. Current literature reveals that racism, sexism, microaggressions, lack of peer support, lack of administrative support and harmful policies are driving this Black teacher exodus. However, we know little about what Black women educators who do persevere in the profession attribute to their career longevity. The purpose of this

qualitative phenomenological study was to examine Black female educator longevity in K-12 environments. The frameworks of Black Feminism (Nash, 2019) and Darling-Hammond's (2021) Bridge to Thriving Framework were used to investigate how Black female educators perceive their ability to thrive despite surviving encounters with oppression. Additionally, this study sought their perspective on what overall professional thriving might look like.

This study involved a series of in-depth, semi-structured, interviews with seven Black, female veteran educators who work in predominantly white settings. Interview data were coded for themes yielding insight into experiences fueled by race, gender, and relationships. The findings of this study indicated that all participants had experiences they attribute to the intersectionality of being Black and female. The importance of community in terms of advocating on behalf of students, relationships with fellow educators and administrators as well as a sense of professional agency and passion for the profession were factors they attributed to their longevity. Ultimately, listening to and learning from Black female veteran educators yielded invaluable insight into both the problems and potential solutions affecting Black female teacher retention. Implications for policy and practice include the need for diversifying teacher education programs and informing schools and districts of practices, policies, and financial resources that support environments where Black female teachers can thrive.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The United States of America is one of the most diverse countries in the world, however, racism has its roots deep within its foundation (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). Though California is the nation's most populous state with 60% of its residents identifying as Asian, Latinx, Indigenous peoples, Black, or multiracial, racism is ever present in public education (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2021). For example, as recently as 1998, though 40 percent of California residents spoke more than one language, policies such as Proposition 227 mandated English only instruction in public schools limiting access to equal education for a large, growing Latinx population and was not appealed until 2016 leaving thousands of children without the services they needed to succeed. Although benefits of diversity are deeply ingrained in the United States and California, and strength in diversity is touted as an asset, racism interferes with the success of people of color.

Further, a decades-long national teacher shortage along with inequitable policies, particularly in schools serving students of color, has become a major obstacle in education. Garcia and Weiss (2020) from The Economic Policy Institute argue the shortage of teachers in the United States could reach 200,000 by 2025 due to concerns about pay, working conditions, lack of support, lack of autonomy and frequently changing curriculum. A greater shortage of teachers of color adds to the problem of inequity and has a compounding negative effect on all of California's students (Beard, 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Graham, 1987; Hollinside, 2017). Lack of representation among educators creates school environments where students do not feel seen and the strengths of their authentic selves are not valued. Although California's diversity is reflected in its public-school students' population, there are vast racial discrepancies between students and teachers. For example, Black and Latinx students make up 60 percent of

the state's students while white students make up roughly 23 percent (California Department of Education, 2022a). Conversely, white teachers make up 63 percent of the teaching force, clearly not reflective of the state or student population (California Department of Education, 2022b).

In fact, there are more than 300,000 public school teachers for over six million students in California, and less than three percent identify as Black or African American (D'amico et al., 2017). This contrasts with the workforce where Blacks represent nearly twice that number of employees (D'amico, et al., 2017). Additionally, lack of minority teacher representation limits opportunities for academic success due to the lack of cultural diversity in teachers hindering an understanding of the richness of various cultures (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Racism takes hold where this limited amount of diversity exists and where culture is not celebrated.

Historical Context

Dismissal of culture was common practice in the mid-20th century when segregation of schools was ruled unconstitutional. Historical and current experiences of Black teachers are based on a legacy of discriminatory practices including racism, microaggressions, lack of peer support, biased policies, and lack of administrative support. Prior to desegregation, Black teachers were in high demand to teach Black children and held a place of honor in the Black community (Ladson-Billings et al., 2021). The 1954 U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to desegregate schools led to integration of Black students into white schools. Black teachers were deemed inferior and unqualified to teach white students due to racist ideology pervading the country (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde et al., 2016). Prior to the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, Black teachers were seen as highly respected professionals and education was the key to lifting the race from poverty to prosperity (King, 1993). After the decision to integrate schools, Black teachers and school

administrators were let go because Black children were integrated into white schools (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde et al., 2016).

Although Black teachers often received advanced degrees at prestigious non-segregated institutions, they were deemed not as well prepared as their white colleagues (Ladson-Billings et al., 2021). Black teachers were fired or subject to full time substitute status, blocked from teachers' unions and subject to proficiency testing to prove their competence (Ladson-Billings et al., 2021). This proved to be problematic as white teachers often did not serve the needs of Black students and created a foundation for deficit thinking about students of color. Generations of students no longer had a teacher or school administrator who would go above and beyond teaching in the classroom to support students (Ladson-Billings et al., 2021). As a result, an exodus of Black teachers into other professions began and a steady decline of Blacks in the teaching profession continues.

Today's Black Teachers

Black teacher retention is a growing problem and the lack of Black K-12 educators has negative consequences for all students (Beard, 2020; Chin et al., 2020; Gist, 2018a; Gist, 2018b; Farinde et al., 2016; Hollinside, 2017; Stanley, 2020). Black teachers have statistically shown to be good for not only Black students but all students due to the unique viewpoints and cultural experiences they bring to white, middle class normed classrooms (Frank et al., 2021). Black teachers make the decision to remain in the classroom in schools where they feel they can make a difference with students, offer alternative practices and viewpoints in terms of pedagogy and ideology, and can connect with the community (Gist, 2018a; Gold, 2020; Tanase, 2020).

Data have shown that Black teachers continue to enter the profession but have higher attrition rates than their white and Latinx counterparts though the number of students of color is

steadily increasing (Benson et al., 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Farinde et al., 2016; Stanley, 2020). Racism directed at both students of color and Black teachers is a key factor in this exodus. Black teachers find themselves intervening between white teachers and students of color placing an extra burden on them. Black teachers leave the profession at higher rates than white peers due to racially related issues, such as not feeling as valued as their white peers, frustration over having to take on extra duties regarding racial issues without being compensated, and not having necessary professional or collegial support systems in place (King, 1993).

This lack of diversity in the teaching profession is of dire concern because in schools where Black teachers are present, achievement of Black and Latinx students is higher than schools where Black teachers are few (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). Moreover, academic performance over a lifetime is increased when Black students have at least one Black teacher by the end of elementary school (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). Additionally, at schools where there are Black teachers, Black and Latinx students have fewer discipline problems (Bristol et al., 2019). Thus, retaining Black teachers is part of the solution to increasing achievement and reducing disciplinary issues for Black and Latinx students.

However, few opportunities for advancement and *Racial Battle Fatigue,* caused by isolation and racial aggressions, move Black teachers out of the profession (Pizzaro et al., 2020). Black teacher retention is also affected by limited professional support and guidance as is evident in relationships with administrators (Farinde et al., 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Hollinside, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Kohli, 2019; Urick, 2016; White et al., 2020). These include lack of administrator support, negative peer interactions and multiple policies at district, state and

federal levels that are fueled by a legacy of racism in the United States (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Gold, 2020; Hollinside, 2017).

Lack of administrator support, both on campus and at the district level, contributes to Black teacher attrition (Reitman et al., 2019). Site administrators are district leadership that work most closely with all teachers, so relationships are a key component to career longevity (Reitman et al., 2019). However, Black teachers are less likely to feel supported or receive positive performance reviews (Reitman et al., 2019). Site administrators are also less likely to promote or encourage Black women into opportunities for advancement within the school system (Matthews, 2019; Reitman et al., 2019). This scenario is duplicated at the district or organizational level as well. Efforts to increase multicultural policies and procedures that induce inclusive workspaces are limited or missing from school districts (Kalkan et al., 2020). Hiring practices and conscious creation of racial equity are also absent, increasing discontent among Black teachers (Gist, 2018b; Mosley, 2018).

Relations with white teachers also play a role in Black teacher retention. Supportive peer relationships are often absent for the Black teacher and feelings of isolation and disconnect occur (Kohli, 2019). Many times, white cultural norms dismiss the differences and needs of Black teachers (Mosley, 2018; Stanley, 2020). Stereotypes and neoliberal colorblindness interfere with combating racial tensions and sometimes lead to hostile encounters as well (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Gold, 2020). Implicit bias surfaces in many white teachers' classrooms and Black teachers often find themselves in a position to provide countermeasures for Black and Brown students (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Gold, 2020). Additionally, white teachers often rely on Black teachers for multicultural materials and

practices under the assumption that Black teachers have an innate wealth of knowledge which also leads to fatigue (Kohli, 2018).

Policy plays an important role in Black teacher attrition. Hiring, training, and retention of Black female teachers has a direct relationship with policies determining school closures, high stakes testing, and discipline practices (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Gold, 2020; Hollinside, 2017). School closures are determined by attendance and testing algorithms which disproportionately affect Black teachers (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Gold, 2020; Hollinside, 2017). High stakes testing and school ranking also disproportionately affect Black teachers who are more likely to be hired in lower performing schools subjected to multiple state mandates (Vinovskis, 2019). Additionally, *zero tolerance* type discipline policies add to Black teacher burnout as Black teachers are more often at schools that abide by these practices. As such, Black teachers find themselves facing disruptive behaviors without restorative practices (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Hollinside, 2017). These negative, punitive, and unsuccessful disciplinary practices counter conditions conducive to career longevity despite initial reasons for entering the profession.

Purpose of the Study

Black female teachers enter the profession with a strong sense of culture and a commitment to challenge racism (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Hollinside, 2017; Stanley, 2020). They also have a strong desire to offset Eurocentric norms by advocating for and including culturally relevant curriculum to better meet the needs of all students (Beard, 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Hollinside, 2017; King, 1993; Matthews, 2019). While there is literature on Black teacher motivation to enter the profession and the negative experiences influencing their decision to leave, there is little research on practices that address

the needs of Black female teachers. More needs to be captured regarding the motivators keeping Black female teachers in the profession despite their negative experiences.

Theoretical Frameworks

Further analysis of Black teacher experiences using tenets of thriving and exploration of experiences using cultural barometers like Black Feminism could help gather ideas leading to positive outcomes. Concepts of Black Feminism (Nash, 2019) and Darling-Hammond's (2021) Bridge to Thriving Framework are such tools. Feelings of autonomy, self-efficacy, and emotional connection to students and colleagues play a strong role in protecting mental health, highlight hope and curate resiliency (Kun, 2019). Particular attention must be paid to factors that contribute to Black teacher longevity. In this study, I used tenets of Black Feminism as described by Nash (2019) and Darling-Hammond's (2021) Bridge to Thriving Framework to examine the lived experiences of Black female veteran educators working in predominantly white settings, the reasons they attribute to their longevity, and how professional thriving might look for them. This study sought to move beyond surviving the teaching profession by analyzing concepts of community, selfhood, abundance, pleasure, and relief. Analyzing workplace well-being of Black female educators with a healing centered lens of engagement was essential to analyze to determine factors conducive to their longevity in K-12 education (Ginwright, 2018). A focus on Black female teacher thriving and the elements that determine career happiness and fulfillment needed to be captured to address Black female teacher longevity. I aimed to collect asset-based strategies that can be used to inform teacher education, district and statewide policies and overall practices.

Throughout this dissertation, the term Black refers to descendants of Africans, stolen and forced into slavery in the United States. Finding a group label to self-identify has been a goal of

Blacks to instill a sense of pride and self-esteem (Smith, 1992). In 1962, *Black* was used to describe those as progressive and forward looking and is the definition used in this paper (Smith, 1992). The progressive, forward-looking nature of this study supports use of this term.

The concept of *resilience* will not be a focal point in this work as it has a focus on the trauma of individuals and what they must do to thrive rather than on the change that needs to occur within the educational system (Ginwright, 2018). This study sought to move away from destroying and taking as colonialism has imprinted within modern day research and has served to keep people of color in disadvantageous positions in society (Love, 2019). Instead, there was a focus on aspirational, linguistic, familial, social capital, navigational and resistance factors that help reveal a new story that has yet to be told about the retention of Black female teachers (Dillard, 2022; Ginwright, 2018; Love, 2019).

This study is unique in that it differs from research that has traditionally claimed objectivity while dismissing historical facts and containing Eurocentric hierarchies (Shields, 2020). Concepts of racial superiority and inferiority have traditionally been infused within research and this approach has done little to support Black teachers remaining in the profession (Love, 2019; Patel, 2015). Language choice, simplistic views of culture, environmental differences, and a mythologicalization of past atrocities that have intergenerational consequences have led to one-sided, deficit-minded research with little to no positive impact (Patel, 2015; Shields, 2020). The absence of anthropological and sociological research taken in context with notions of the colonized or colonizers have left a void in literature regarding Black teacher retention (Patel, 2015). Rarely are the voices of people of color captured in an asset affirmative form and this has played a role in past and present research. Complex wholes, interconnectivity, and intersectionality are often simplified or dismissed and are categorized by negative

characteristics and interventions that maintain the colonial perspective status quo (Patel, 2015). Narratives of challenges and resilience about communities under duress that focus on fixing the participant rather than changing the system have been the norm (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Instead, this study sought to eradicate these negative perspectives by examining the intricacies of K-12 Black female educators experiences to capture, celebrate, and duplicate environments in which Black female educators can rise, thrive, and remain in the K-12 system (Shields, 2020). Dillard (2022) defines this authentic (Re)Membering as addressing historical legacies to bring back joy and grace. She adds, "And when Black women teachers (re)member, everything is possible" (Dillard, 2022, p. 25).

My Experience

I come to this research as a member of the Black female educator community. I have over 20 years of experience teaching in public elementary and middle schools in two states. In each of my placements, I was often the only Black adult on campus and knew my presence carried more than the weight of what occurred in my classrooms. I was a role model and advocate for students who looked like me and knew I was often the first Black person in a professional position my non-Black students had seen. I found myself advocating for diverse curriculum and restorative discipline practices and then being tasked to do research about them and share findings with the staff with little support and no additional compensation. I was the victim of countless microaggressions by peers and accused of being oversensitive and radical if I confronted the aggressor. While I was fortunate to have positive relationships with administrators, I did experience being overlooked for requested additional compensated responsibilities despite my heavy involvement in voluntary activities. I do not stay in the profession based on my experiences, but from an intrinsic desire to better society. I want to know the motivating factors

behind other female veteran K-12 Black educators and what conditions they would need to not just survive but thrive professionally.

Research Questions

The following overarching research question and subquestions guided this study: How has being Black and female shaped teachers' experiences and longevity in the profession?

A. What experiences do Black female teachers describe as being based on historical or systemic racial and gender dynamics?
B. What factors do Black female teachers attribute to their remaining in the profession in spite of experiences they perceive to be due to their race and or gender?
C. How do Black female teachers define professional thriving in K-12 environments and what do they attribute to their own sense of thriving throughout their careers?

This study used a qualitative phenomenological approach to capture Black veteran educator perspectives about why they remained in K-12 education. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with Black educators with over 10 years experience in K-12 environments. The intention was to gather information about their lived experiences and the meaning conveyed from said experiences (Seidman, 2019). Seidman's (2019) three-interview approach was modified as the interview format to allow participants to build trust with the researcher and reflect on their interview responses.

Significance of the Study

In light of social justice and educational leadership implications, further research that focuses on ways to support Black teachers needed to occur and this study's aim was to contribute to the field. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups can capture experiences. Research

can be used to inform professional development and policy changes harmful to Black teacher retention. Training that will strengthen cultural awareness and culturally responsive pedagogy for all parties related to school campuses should occur and funds should be allocated to do so. The historic trend of declining Black teachership needs to be addressed to close the growing opportunity gap for students of color. Researching issues related to the role racism plays on administrator practices, white peer relationships and site, district, state, and federal policy exposes specific issues and identifies strategies that will keep Black teachers in the profession. Targeting factors that provide conditions where thriving can occur offers new strategies to aid in increasing Black female teacher retention.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to identify historical factors that affect Black teachers in K-12 classrooms and to examine how systemic issues continue to play a role in Black teacher retention. It will also examine concepts of Black female identity and professional thriving. Drawing on data compiled from peer-reviewed research, emerging themes are discussed as they specifically relate to Black teacher retention and Black teacher thriving. This literature review explores reasons why Black women enter the teaching profession, what their experiences are in K-12 schools, and factors that explicitly or implicitly drive them away. Black women have the dual identities of being Black and female so an examination of those identities and how they relate to teacher identity will also be discussed. Tenets of Black Feminism (Nash, 2019) including love of self, sisterhood and community are explored as are Darling-Hammond's Bridge to Thriving Framework (2021). Both will be presented as theoretical frameworks to examine the current experiences of Black teachers and educators as a whole.

Historical Context

Pre Brown v. Board of Education

For decades, teachers were the largest group of Black professionals and providers of leadership within the Black community (King, 1993; Love, 2019). Black teachers were the primary educators for Black students and were sought out by districts to teach Black students exclusively (Brown et al., 2018; Farinde et al., 2016). The greatest producers of Black teachers were historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), primarily located in the South and Northeast (D'amico et al., 2017; King, 1993). These teachers were considered pillars in the Black community regardless of economic status. Communities often pooled financial resources to retain Black teachers, provide supplies, and secure meeting spaces for their children

demonstrating community respect for and dedication to education (D'amico et al., 2017; King, 1993; Love, 2019).

Despite the value the Black community placed on education, a downward trend in the number of Black teachers began in 1954 with the *Brown v. Board of Education* U.S. Supreme Court decision to desegregate schools. Integrating Black students into white schools included no protections for the 82,000 Black teachers seen as unfit to teach white students (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde et al., 2016). Black teachers found themselves displaced and began seeking other careers that were slowly opening as a result of desegregation. The decades following continued to see a decline in the number of Black K-12 teachers and by the 1980s, Blacks made up less than seven percent of the teaching force though the number of Black students continued to increase (Graham, 1987). As of 2018, only 18% of K-12 teachers were people of color and Black teachers remain under seven percent (Gold, 2020).

Racial perceptions of inferiority contributed to the low number of Black teachers remaining in the profession. While white teachers were donned saviors and talented educators and were glorified for dedicating their careers to rescue Black and Brown children, Black teachers were denigrated and systematically removed from teaching because they were believed to be inferior educators (Brown et al., 2018). Black teachers able to stay in the profession were disproportionately placed in lower performing schools with few resources (Benson et al., 2020). Their success was attributed to kinship and parental substitute roles rather than hard work, dedication, and training (Brown et al., 2018). It was also assumed and expected that Black teachers would serve as role models and have all answers to help struggling Black students (Brown et al., 2018). These stereotypical representations disregarded Black teacher expertise and turned many potential Black teachers away from careers in education (Brown et al., 2018). Thus,

Black teachers have gone from the only people teaching Black students to being pushed out of their careers, devalued, stereotyped, and tokenized. This historical legacy laid the foundation for the current inequities that exist in the K-12 educational environment.

Present Day Implications

Some schools and districts have recognized the lack of Black teachers in K-12 schools and have created recruitment programs and alternative routes to teaching credentials designed to bring Black teachers into classrooms. However, the Black teacher shortage is caused more by retention issues than recruitment efforts, so these programs have not done much to address the Black K-12 teacher shortage (Benson et al., 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Carver-Thomas, et al., 2017; Farinde et al., 2016; Stanley, 2020). In fact, teachers of color have a 50% turnover in their first five years of teaching and these numbers are higher in low performing schools with high minority, high poverty populations where many Black teachers work (Gist, 2018b; Hollinside, 2017; Holme et al., 2018; White et al., 2020). Black teacher retention and turnover is a function of compensation, school characteristics, lack of teacher preparation, and working conditions (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Carver-Thomas, 2018; Farinde et al., 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Gist, 2018b; Hollinside, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; White et al., 2020). A Supreme Court ruling from over 60 years ago, meant to increase educational opportunities for Black students, instead, left limited opportunities for Black teachers which continues today.

Black Teachers in Today's Classrooms

Motivation to Enter Teaching

Black teachers enter the profession due to their heightened awareness of the challenges facing students in minority communities. They hope to bring pedagogy countering white,

middle-class norms and connect with students outside of the assumed white European culture, values, religions, art, languages, and perspectives present throughout the curriculum that pushes out and subordinates students of color (Benson et al., 2020; Hyland, 2005). Love (2019) has named this concept, *Abolitionist teaching* where mattering and citizenship are married to thriving, freedom and joy. Fighting for justice and mattering are actions often taken by Black teachers and have proven to be beneficial for all students leading to increased job satisfaction, therefore, retention (Love, 2019). Black teachers bring culturally relevant pedagogy that involves understanding student culture as well as the importance of linking it explicitly to the classroom (Tanase, 2020). They recognize the need to develop cultural potential and maximize achievement for the growing racial, ethnic and language diversity entering today's classrooms (Tanase, 2020). Such culturally relevant pedagogy bridges gaps in achievement and removes some of the negative disciplinary actions that occur in K-12 schools (Benson et al., 2020; Frank et al., 2021). This politics of refusal creates Black teacher/student of color relationships that lead to better school performance due to the teacher's knowledge of culture and student perspective (Gist, 2018a; Gold, 2020; Love, 2019, Tanase, 2020). This creates positive experiences with their Black students and an ability to relate to a variety of students (Beard, 2020; Chin et al., 2020; Gist, 2018a; Gist 2018b; Farinde et al., 2016; Hollinside, 2017; Stanley, 2020). Relationships between Black teachers and their students have a level of empathy and understanding creating a culture of success and acceptance.

In fact, a key component of Black teacher identity is the self-proclaimed role of protecting Black children from racialized harm (James-Gallaway et al., 2021; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2020). Whether it be physical or institutional white supremacy, Black female teachers see themselves both wanting to protect children of color and

change the system they and their students function within (James-Gallaway et al., 2021; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2020). Assimilationist frameworks pervade the K-12 arena and attack Black teachers and non-white students alike leaving Black teachers feeling the need to act against injustice (James-Gallaway et al., 2021; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2020). As the United States was founded on the dispossession of Indigenous people and exploitation of Black labor, anti-Black and Brown racism has infused itself within all systemic organizations, including and especially in our K-12 schools (Warren et al., 2020).

Educating Black people from slavery to present day has been centered around controlling minds with policies like anti-literacy laws and practices that make the Black student feel their race will never measure up to the standards of others (Warren et al., 2020). This idea is perpetuated both consciously and covertly in current K-12 schools where Black students are overrepresented with discipline issues and underrepresented in high level courses, particularly where the teaching force is majority white and female (Warren et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020). The presence of Black teachers counters this by fostering racial congruence, the idea that Black teachers have higher expectations for Black and brown students and are more likely to provide support necessary to meet those expectations (Williams et al., 2020). This includes more opportunities for student self-expression and more chances to correct behavior before formal sanctions are deployed (Williams et al., 2020). Black teachers are more likely to both be aware of these tendencies and resist them to support their students.

Additionally, Black teachers willingly take the responsibility to serve as role models as they have done historically (Benson et al., 2020; Hyland, 2005). Minority students perceive Black teachers to be mentors who affirm the relationship to education and the academic,

political, social, and economic success of African Americans (Bristol et al., 2019; Love, 2019). Often, students of color and of low socioeconomic status do not see themselves in positions of power or authority which limits desire to pursue careers requiring high levels of education, yet Black teachers often fulfill that role (Anderson, 2018; Gold, 2020; Hollinside, 2017; King, 1993; Stanley, 2020). Black teachers offer representation of educational possibilities for students who might not otherwise see themselves in such positions. Thus, a lack of Black teachers and lack of cultural connection between teachers and students has led to unequal access in public education (Ingersoll et al., 2019). Black teacher and student relationships are a crucial part of student success due to increased culturally relevant pedagogy, reduced implicit bias, service as role models, and advocates for Black students.

Reasons Black Teachers Stay

A strong sense of culture, Black identity, and commitment to challenging racism are why many Black teachers enter and remain in the teaching profession (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Hollinside, 2017; Stanley, 2020). Vocational goals include positively affecting the community, fulfilling the need for a culturally relevant curriculum, and offsetting the Eurocentric nature of schools that lessen a Black student's desire to learn (Beard, 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Hollinside, 2017; King, 1993; Matthews, 2019). For Black teachers, intrinsic motivators include a commitment to giving back and being a racial role model for students who often do not see people who look like them in professional roles (Beard, 2020).

Connection to the school community contributes to professional longevity as well (Kokka, 2016). In fact, intrinsic motivation is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, a basic psychological need for job retention (Klaeijsen et al., 2018). Feelings of self-efficacy empower teachers to be innovative in terms of student needs, so when Black teachers feel seen,

heard, and respected it is more likely they will be innovative in meeting the needs of their students (Klaeijsen et al., 2018). Black teachers know it is important for all students to see a diverse group of adults in positions of authority who will advocate on their behalf. These teachers note the satisfaction they receive from relationships with students, seeing students grow, and a love of teaching as the primary reason for staying in K-12 schools (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; King, 1993). Although Black teachers are aware of the needs they meet for students, this positive role is often not enough to counter the variety of implicit and explicit racist incidents and practices they encounter in their K-12 careers (Benson et al., 2020).

However, many Black female teachers stay in the profession despite their challenging experiences. This group of women identify the need to protect Black children from racism they are bombarded with as a top priority (Benson et al., 2020; Hyland, 2005). Black female teachers see themselves as protectors and a system of support, often because they have had the same experiences of their students and had no one to protect and guide them (Benson et al., 2020; Hyland, 2005). A second tenet of the Black female teacher identity is Black feminism. Nash (2019) describes this as love of self, love of sisterhood and love of community. Many Black female teachers practice this type of critical, intersectional, anti-racist pedagogy that offers students a level of support not seen from their white teachers (James-Gallaway et al., 2021; Kynard, 2020). Silence and complacency are not an option as is represented in a third aspect of the Black teacher identity which is a heightened sense of socio-political consciousness. Black teachers navigate and critique the values, norms, curriculum, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequality and display knowledge, skills, a heightened socio-political consciousness, and dispositions to resist white supremacist practices and critically engage with students (Jackson et al., 2021; James-Gallaway et al., 2021). Historical, lived, and observed

situations have ingrained themselves into the Black female educator and are apparent in all aspects of her professional life. Finally, those with a strong Black teacher identity have discovered and practice strategies that counter internalized racism. Black women in America have been demoralized, overworked, underpaid, and unappreciated in both historical settings and popular culture. Thus, Black feminism creates a space of joy with power and influence as outcomes (Love, 2019). Without a strong sense of identity, Black female teachers could fail to flourish due in part to internalized negativity fed to them.

Although the majority of Black female teachers attend teacher preparation programs in predominantly white institutions, Black women teachers consistently show strong evidence of incorporating social justice practices (Jackson et al., 2021; James-Gallaway et al., 2021; Warren et al., 2020). Without direct instruction, Black teachers understand the coddling of white students around historical, social, and political issues and the consequences of racism, sexism, xenophobia, etc. and challenge these concepts with all students (James-Gallaway et al., 2021). Concrete experiences enable Black teachers to interweave historical knowledge and personal experiences into classroom decisions. Such practices ensure academic success, developing and maintaining cultural competence, and developing critical consciousness to challenge the status quo (James-Gallaway et al., 2021). While free market and competition concepts of neoliberalism have our society no longer caring about the common good in favor of competition, Black female teachers have sought to rival these ideas (Love, 2019).

Impact of Racism on Teacher Retention

Due to the racialized harm that often occurs to our Black and brown children, the classroom of the Black teacher becomes a space where Black feminists practice critical, intersectional, and anti-racist pedagogy (James-Gallaway et al., 2021; Kynard, 2020). For Black

teachers and students, anti-Blackness is hidden behind premises of being color blind though the result is the devaluing, disdaining, and disregarding of Black culture (Frank et al., 2021). To counter this, Black female teachers find themselves rejecting the status quo and working toward creative alternatives producing work with more possibilities and connections to a larger group of students (Kynard, 2020). Black female teachers advance a social justice agenda by interweaving historical lessons to conceptualize future visions (Warren et al., 2020).

Despite the altruistic reasons Black teachers enter K-12 environments, a legacy of racism negatively affects their retention. Where there is no dignity, there is no power so while Black teachers enter the profession to change the lives of Black and brown youth, they often deal with racism themselves which hinders their ability to be as effective as they could be (Benson et al., 2020; Love 2019). Racism experienced by Black teachers and students is a source of discontent and many Black teachers feel their school sites are not organized to best serve Black children or staff members in terms of curriculum, discipline, or support (Beard, 2020; Hollinside, 2017; Kohli et al., 2017). A lack of diversity and implied responsibility to speak on behalf of the race causes feelings of isolation and professional discontent (Matthews, 2019). This persistent awareness and demand to defend race and positionality contributes to burn out (Matthews, 2019).

This special type of professional fatigue that causes Black teachers to leave K-12 education is due to an extra workload that has been called the *Invisible Tax* or *Black Teacher Tax* (Pizzaro et al., 2020). This refers to the expectation Black teachers will serve as disciplinarians, provide uncompensated time in informal leadership roles, serve as curators of culturally relevant resources and often it is assumed they will fulfill the expectation to teach remediatory courses with the most challenging students (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Frank et al., 2021; Gold, 2020;

Kokka, 2016; Mosley, 2018). This tax also includes the extra time and energy needed to navigate tense peer dialogue, explain intentions, and face potential professional retaliation (Frank et al., 2021; Matthews, 2019). Their white peers do not see or understand the undue stress this adds to the Black teacher workload adding to the mental cost of being a Black teacher navigating white teaching spaces. Further, neoliberal racism in the form of color blindness from well-meaning white parents and staff members add to Black teacher distress (Kohli et al., 2017). Black teachers often must weather subtle, insensitive cultural comments or have their culture entirely dismissed in the colorblind settings many schools have created adding to the professional fatigue they encounter.

In addition to facing colorblind ideologies, Black teachers must combat microaggressions which lead to a sense of frustration and burnout. Microaggressions often are subtle, negative exchanges including comments or insults (Frank et al., 2021). Examples of microaggressions include dismissive behaviors like refusal to believe a racial incident occurred, cultural slights where white cultural norms are placed above others, and insensitive comments from white peers that put down Black teachers' physical, emotional, or cultural traits (Kohli, 2019). Additional incidents of microaggressions can include having to prove one's ability and the pathologizing of cultural norms of communication and feelings of second-class citizenship (Frank et al., 2021). This contributes to *Racial Battle Fatigue* and Black teacher attrition (Hollinside, 2017; Kohli, 2018). *Racial Battle Fatigue*, a term coined by Critical Race Theorist, William Smith in 2008, is classified as the psychological, emotional, and physiological toll of confronting racism (Kohli, 2018; Pizarro et al., 2020). The impact of *Racial Battle Fatigue* leads to self-doubt, can produce anxiety, and exhaust the Black teacher (Pizarro et al., 2020). Black teachers face racism from multiple angles in a variety of capacities throughout their careers. In addition to societal

occurrences such as George Floyd's public killing by a police officer and the protests that followed, race becomes an unavoidable topic. However, with little support in terms of discussion, empathy, and action plans to address the issue at a campus level, Black teachers are often left to provide their own ways to help students and themselves deal with racial incidents. Administrators and peers' actions and policies could play a role in supporting the retention of Black teachers, though their lack of action often contributes to *Racial Battle Fatigue* and Black teachers leaving K-12 classrooms altogether. Many Black teachers reach a point of feeling fed up with racial hostility and select to leave the K-12 environment to get away from "the bullshit" (Benson et al., 2020, p. 19). Hostile racial climates on both interpersonal and institutional levels are a core cause of the Black teacher exodus (King, 1993; Kohli, 2019).

Role of Administrative Support

Lack of Support for Black Teacher Relationships

Relationships with administrators play a role in combating the *Invisible Teacher Tax* and *Racial Battle Fatigue*. In most districts, site administrators have the most influence on granting Black teachers access to jobs and are frontline resources to combat racial issues on sites (D'amico et al., 2017). While all teachers need to feel supported in terms of relationships, pedagogical knowledge, perception of competence, mentoring, professional learning, and reflection, this component is often missing for Black teachers (Reitman et al., 2019). This makes positive interactions with administrators even more important in making a positive impact on relationships and Black teacher retention (Reitman et al., 2019). Administrative support can come in the form of evaluations, regular communication, recognition, and professional improvement opportunities (Matthews, 2019). However, this support for Black teachers is often absent (Reitman et al., 2019).

Due to racial tensions experienced on campuses, Black teachers need strong relationships and reliable academic administrative support to address feelings of isolation (Stanley, 2020; Urick, 2016). Principals can create and maintain environments where discussions of race and racism are incorporated into professional development for all staff (Gist 2018b; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Kohli, 2019; Mosley, 2018). One of the ways this can be done is when the advocacy, caring, and experiential knowledge of Black teachers is acknowledged, respected, and utilized (Stanley, 2020; Urick, 2016). Site administrative support dramatically increases the likelihood of a teacher staying in the profession (Beard, 2020; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Olitsky, 2020). Therefore, cultural responsiveness must be a commitment held firmly by the site administrator even if there is no such precedence on site or on the district level (Khalifa et al., 2016; Love, 2019; Stanley, 2020).

However, Black teachers are one tenth as likely to report receiving support at their sites, and teachers of color are also judged more harshly on teacher evaluations than their white peers, sometimes at a rate of 50% more likely to score lower (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Gold, 2020; Hollinside, 2017). Without administrative support, racial stereotyping, experiences of exclusion, and the emotional labor of being the only Black teacher often led to job dissatisfaction and retention issues (Kohli, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2020). Being seen as weak, overly emotional, and not fit for the job adds to negative relationships (Kohli, 2018). Holding back emotional labor to avoid peer conflict makes navigating relationships with administrators extra challenging and wears away at the desire to stay in the profession (Beard, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020).

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture including directed aims, activities, and attitudes in the organization that are inclusive of multiculturalism play a role in Black teacher retention (Kalkan

et al., 2020). District, county, and state administrators must create inclusive workspaces forged from partnerships with teachers and offer teachers the opportunity to focus on teaching and learning (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Kalkan et al., 2020; Urick, 2016). School leaders can create spaces where Black teacher voices are a prominent part of conversations and plans (Kalkan et al., 2020). Administrators should also work to center the voices of racial justice-oriented teachers and policies within site goals and staff norms (Kalkan et al., 2020). Equitable practices influencing school climate, structure, teacher efficacy, and student outcomes must be enforced by the site administrator (Khalifa et al., 2016). They can also ensure this occurs by using hiring practices lending themselves to diversity and providing Black teachers paid opportunities to share their expertise (Gist, 2018b; Mosley, 2018). Administrators need to create and maintain a distinct racial consciousness along with site level support that is beneficial for Black teachers (Beard, 2020). Administrator cultivation of campus diversity training and values combats racism with all parties on campus.

Further, culturally responsive district, county, and state school leaders must be action-based, commit to purposeful attention to recruiting and retaining teachers of color, and must have an emphasis on inclusivity (Khalifa et al., 2016; Stanley, 2020). Educational leaders on all levels must develop diversity intelligence which will demonstrate the value of different perspectives to support Black teachers to keep them in the profession (Gist, 2018b). This includes the administrator's ability to navigate a variety of social, cultural, and racial issues by developing tools to best work with individuals and best utilize the abilities of all workers (Gist, 2018b). Black teachers need leaders to act upon their awareness of extra expectations often placed on them or psychophysiological symptoms caused by navigating unsupportive white spaces will cause more Black teachers to leave the profession (Mosley, 2018).

Navigating White Peer Relationships

Relationships between Black teachers and their white peers also play a role in Black teacher retention. While a community of supportive peers helps counter negative experiences on a school site, Black teachers often do not have this on predominantly white staffed campuses (Kohli, 2019). Instead of a sense of community, feelings of isolation occur because Black teachers feel disconnected from school climate and norms (Hollinside, 2017; Kohli, 2018; Mosley, 2018; Stanley, 2020). White teachers often fail to acknowledge the unique needs of Black teachers causing cultural incongruencies due to differing ideas about pedagogy and discipline (Hollinside, 2017; Kohli, 2018; Mosley, 2018; Stanley, 2020). White teachers' majority norms and values often overpower those of Black teachers furthering professional disconnect (Beard, 2020; Hollinside, 2017). This contributes to feelings of isolation and accumulates to form professional discontent contributing to a desire to leave the profession.

Teachers of color reported lack of support when working through sociocultural issues with their white peers. White teachers pay little regard to racial identity, nor have a sense of responsibility to challenge stereotypes leading to alienation (Kohli, 2018). Black teachers find their ideas undervalued, disrespected, and dismissed in comparison to and by their white colleagues (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Gold, 2020; Love, 2019). In fact, some report feeling othered or seen as a representative for their race rather than an academic asset to the faculty (Beard, 2020).

Relationships between Black and white teachers are also negatively affected by the way each group addresses racial issues (Hollinside, 2017; Stanley, 2020). White teachers are often not aware of the ways in which they commit macro or microaggressions. An assumption of colorblindness and equality leads to hostile encounters when Black teachers confront racial

issues (Kohli, 2019; Love, 2019). Safe, collective, racially inclusive workspaces and teaching practices are rare resulting in isolation for Black teachers (Kohli, 2019). Inability to have discussions when racial tensions may arise leads to ostracization of Black teachers on campuses (Hollinside, 2017; Kohli, 2019; Stanley, 2020).

Implicit bias towards students of color plays a role in teacher relationships and levels of support as well. White teachers often are not aware of their bias, though white students score higher than Black students where there are higher levels of pro-white/anti-Black implicit and explicit bias (Chin et al., 2020). This shows a further need for Black teachers to have the ability to bridge culture and curriculum through their content knowledge, pedagogical training, and shared cultural identity (Chin et al., 2020). When Black teachers direct attention to implicit bias and potential ways to address the issue, white teachers often counter with an argument of low expectations, blaming families, and shaming students for bringing their cultures into the classroom (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Hyland, 2005). From blatant racism to personal slights, multiple layers of racism from peer teachers' comments about students of color lead to racial subordination of Black teachers in white spaces (Kohli, 2018). This also plays out when Black teachers report being re-traumatized by watching the way their peers treat Black students, often reminding them of the treatment they received while in K-12 schools (Beard, 2020; Kohli, 2018). As a result, Black teachers are put in a situation to speak against their peers on behalf of students. This type of bias countering is something Black teachers take on, but it attributes to Black teachers' professional fatigue and desire to stay in the profession.

Professional drain also occurs when white peers expect Black teachers to take on challenging students without regard to the extra responsibility added to Black teacher duties. This additional role of counselor and disciplinarian is due to the assumption Black teachers will

automatically know how to resolve issues with Black students (Kohli, 2018). In actuality, the extra time and attention Black teachers give to culturally relevant pedagogy is what drives these positive encounters with Black students. White teachers fail to see that while Black teachers commit to activism on behalf of children of color, this adds to their workload (Hollinside, 2017). However, Black teachers take on these extra loads. The presence of Black teachers can increase the number of Black students placed in advanced courses and lower discipline referral rates (Bristol et al., 2018). This success is due in part to use of warm, yet firm disciplinary practices rather than those that are punitive. Black teachers demonstrate traits and attitudes that counter what many students face from their white teachers. Students of all races expressed a preference for this type of demeanor and disciplinary approach (Kohli, 2019).

Effects of Policy on Black Teacher Retention

Policy plays a large role in the hiring, training, and retention of Black female teachers. As with administrators and teachers on K-12 campuses, policies at district, state, and federal levels play a significant role in training, hiring, and retention of Black teachers, specifically regarding school closures, high stakes testing, and discipline issues (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Gold, 2020; Hollinside, 2017). States such as California have protocols and criteria designed to guide decisions to close schools due to issues like declining enrollment or financial reasons and ethnicity is to be a factor considered. However, Black teachers are disproportionately affected by these closures (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Gold, 2020; Hollinside, 2017). For instance, school closures cause 30% of all teachers' moves though Black teachers make up 50% of teachers losing jobs due to closures (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; White et al., 2020). Black teachers have a higher turnover due to involuntary separation like layoffs from these closures and increased class size due to budget cuts as well (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; King, 1993). As such, Black

students and teachers disproportionately feel the effects of policy decisions that determine which schools stay open more than their white peers.

Additionally, high stakes testing and the policies mandating school performance as a result of these test scores play an important part in Black female teacher retention. Teacher workload such as exhaustive preparation for high-stakes testing is reported as a reason for attrition (Farinde et al., 2016; Ingersoll et al., 2019). While standardized testing has been a part of the United States educational system since approximately 1875, policies in the 1960s concerned with eliminating poverty and addressing civil rights issues increased federal involvement in K-12 schools, particularly around educational measurements (Vinovskis, 2019). Publications such as *A Nation at Risk, No Child Left Behind,* and *Goals 2000* led to high stakes testing being linked to achievement and graduation, resulting in the penalization for low performing schools with restructuring and closings (Vinovskis, 2019). These school closures unequally affect Black teachers and lead to their attrition because Black teachers often choose or are placed in inner city schools with lower test scores and become victims when high stakes testing or school profit-making corporations take over low performing schools (White et al., 2020).

Black female teacher retention is connected to discipline policies as well. Lower performing schools tend to have more discipline issues that are resolved with zero tolerance policies (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Hollinside, 2017). Instead of restorative practices that lead to behavior changes, students are temporarily removed from the learning environment only to return with the same behaviors. Lack of support with discipline issues were reported as motivators for Black teachers to leave the profession (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Hollinside, 2017). Student disruptive behavior has a negative impact on student learning and classroom instruction

though teachers were concerned about a lack of follow through in the form of behavior plans or corrective action from administration (Matthews, 2019). Black teachers are left to negotiate on behalf of Black students to nullify the negative effects of extreme discipline (Matthews, 2019). Discipline policy changes could help mitigate this negative behavior cycle and retain Black teachers.

Additional policy changes could create opportunities for Black teachers to advance their K-12 careers and positively affect Black teacher retention (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde et al., 2016; Hollinside, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Stanley, 2020). Creating programs such as teacher residencies, high quality mentoring, and opportunities for career advancement, which are generally limited for Black teachers, would aid in retention (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Hollinside, 2017; Matthews, 2019). These types of support would help to counter obstacles many Black students face when pursuing a teaching degree or credential. Other financial incentives including teacher salaries and loan forgiveness programs would also be beneficial in supporting Black teachers (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Carver-Thomas, 2018; Farinde et al., 2016). These policy changes can be implemented at district, state and federal levels.

A better understanding of effective support systems for Black teachers is essential to retaining them. Policy implementing supportive pathways into teaching, proactive hiring and induction strategies, and improving school teaching conditions through improved leadership will counter racist practices and support Black teacher retention (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2016). Methods like offering professional development focused on Black teacher needs will help them navigate the lack of resources and discipline issues they face, thus helping with retention as well (Gist, 2018b).

While the literature has many discussions on historical racism, Black teacher pedagogy, professional relationships and policies that lead to Black teacher attrition, there are areas with minimal research. There appear to be few studies on effective ways to address the unique needs of teachers of color, particularly with focus on training non-Black administrators and staff to help improve the school environment for Black teachers.

Teacher Happiness

The literature review will now move from discussing the historical and current experiences of Black teachers in K-12 education to discussing what the literature says about teacher happiness and job satisfaction. While all teachers are leaving the profession at higher rates than in the past, Black teachers are leaving at up to 25% higher rates than their non-minority counterparts, thus an analysis of factors attributing to job satisfaction is important (Benson et al., 2020).

In order to retain Black teachers, happiness, well-being, and a positive work environment are necessary components of the K-12 setting. This is especially crucial considering the racially charged and often isolating workplaces where Black teachers are often employed. For our students to be well, the teachers must be also (Love, 2019). Happiness and thriving can involve attending to the threats that interfere with happiness (Darling-Hammond, 2021).

At the personal level, this includes involvement in the community, knowing self, access to abundant resources, relief from stressors, and engaging in pleasurable activities (Darling-Hammond, 2021). These factors relate closely to the main pillars of teachers' workplace happiness including environments where goals can be achieved, productive feedback is provided, and there are meaningful relationships (Kun et al., 2019).

Strong Black teachers have also learned to counter internalized racism by developing independent personal ideas, beliefs, actions, and behaviors that counter the messages of white supremacy (Jackson et al., 2021; James-Gallaway et al., 2021). This promotes a sense of autonomy and teaching according to one's values, ideas, and experimentation with teaching methods (James-Gallaway et al., 2021; Skaalvik et al., 2014). Concepts of self-love, love for others, and a strong sense of heritage and cultural memory also assist in countering the internalization of racism (Jackson et al., 2021; James-Gallaway et al., 2021). Autonomy and a strong sense of self are essential to combat the racism that permeates throughout all parts of society.

Black Americans have been bombarded with negative images, commentary, and histories as long as they have been in this country. Thus, forming a positive racial identity has been a challenging, yet essential, part of finding success in a country that systemically has worked to maintain negative stereotypes. The Black American Racial Identity Continuum (BARIC) can be used to measure a person's development towards positive racial identity (Cross, 1995). On one end of the BARIC is the pre-encounter phase where the beliefs and values of the dominant white culture have been internalized and assimilation is the goal (Cross, 1995). The second stage is encounter, usually occurring during adolescence where an individual has a series of racially spawned events and can no longer ignore the impact of racism in their lives (Cross, 1995). Immersion/emersion is the third stage in which the individual both desires and seeks out opportunities to surround themselves with visible symbols of their own racial identity, often purposefully avoiding symbols of whiteness (Cross, 1995). The fourth stage, internalization, occurs when the individual is secure in their own racial identity and is willing to establish relationships with whites that acknowledge their self-definition (Cross, 1995). The fifth and final

stage reflects a positive sense of self as anchor to a commitment to concerns of Blacks (Cross, 1995). This Internalization-Commitment stage allows for security in racial self-identity and an allegiance to social justice issues. Position on the Black American Racial Identity Continuum can help assess how Black female teachers perceive their experiences and role within K-12 schools. Therefore, assessing a sense of self in terms of Black racial identity can help identify aspects of thriving. To be successful, Black women have to be whole, trust and value themselves and need models of greatness that look like them (Dillard, 2022). These factors contribute to a strong sense of racial self-identity that contributes to longevity and sense of purpose.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks used in this study draw from Black Feminism (Nash, 2019) and The Bridge to Thriving Framework (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Black Feminism was used to analyze the racial and gendered experiences of Black female educators and The Bridge to Thriving Framework was used to assess dimensions of thriving and to explore conditions and factors that would allow a Black female educator to thrive. The literature reveals historical factors that affect all aspects of Black educator experiences including relationships with administrators and peers, systems of support and policy. Through the lens of Black feminism, experiences of the Black educator can be examined in terms of where race or gender were determining factors in a particular experience. The Bridge to Thriving Framework helps to categorize reasons Black educators remain in the profession in terms of career longevity due to knowledge of self and knowing the importance of community while seeking agency and experiencing a sense of belonging. These frameworks channel historical repercussions into concepts that can help examine current experiences of Black female educators in today's educational settings.

Black Feminism

Black feminism addresses the unique factors being Black and female bring about. It addresses the hopes and perils of Black women as a felt experience as much as an intellectual enterprise (Nash, 2019). The intersectionality of being Black and female influences how this set of teachers experience the K-12 educational arena. The Combahee River Collective argued the genesis of contemporary Black feminism originated in Black women's resistance by women like Sojourner Truth who spoke of shared awareness of sexual and racial identities and the negativity that came with being Black and female (Moraga et al.,1983). The intersection of sexism and racism have affected their consciousness and worldview (hooks, 2000). Modern day Black feminism believes Black women are valuable and, in their liberation, want autonomy and desire to be recognized as human (Moraga et al.,1983). Kendall (2020) and hooks (2000) argued that modern day feminism focuses not on issues of basic survival for the many, but rather privilege for the few, particularly focused on the needs of white women. Issues of race and class highlight how intersectionality interplay within the traditional notions of feminism (Kendall, 2020). Although all teachers struggle with workplace negativity, Black women teachers live in daily oppressive situations and are aware of patriarchal politics in ways their male and non-Black peers do not (hooks, 2000).

Thus, Black feminism was born to fill that void. To counter the emotional labor that comes with walking through space sure not to ruffle feathers or confront those who may have caused harm, Black female teachers have found a special way to advocate for educational access, challenge internalized biases all the while seeing potential in her students (Dillard, 2022; Kendall, 2020). Black feminism seeks liberation of all oppressed peoples as well (Moraga et al., 1983). As with Black women in the greater society, Black female teachers have always leaned

upon one another, dealt with condescension from their white peers, been dismissed and have been subjected to a history of silencing (hooks, 2000). Black females, teachers included, cannot afford to see themselves as victims because their survival and ability to thrive depend on the personal powers they possess (Dillard, 2022; hooks, 2000). Figure 2.1 demonstrates the interconnectivity of the Black experience and the Female experience in the life of a Black female educator. Concepts from the literature were commingled to inform the study and the figure demonstrates how both identities require willful resistance that work toward liberation.

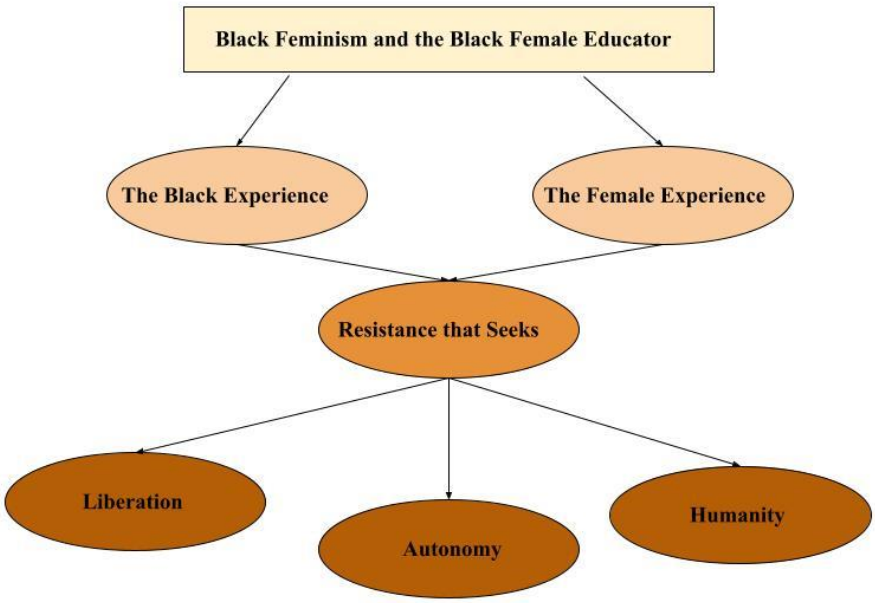

Figure 2.1: Black Feminism and the Black Female Educator

Bridge to Thriving Framework

Darling-Hammond's (2021) Bridge to Thriving Framework attends to the oppressive and often destructive environments that schools can be which result in mental and physical anguish. In terms of Black female teacher retention, this plays a significant role in attrition. Darling-Hammond (2021) posits that thriving and well-being are often centered in white, western, middle

class, cisgendered experiences and that this perspective fails to consider the wealth of thriving practices that marginalized communities experience and do not give credence to the historical experiences of these groups.

To address these issues, the Bridge to Thriving Framework centers marginalized communities by going beyond resilience and emphasizing the need for supportive affirming communities, knowing the true self, abundant access to resources, and pleasurable activities that create a thriving model of simply being (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Possibilities for thriving increase when people are invited to see themselves as someone who is entitled to thrive, imagines what thriving can look like and receive affirmation about their thriving filled dreams (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Self-descriptors that include the ability to be themselves also lead to people whose dimensions of community, selfhood, abundance, pleasure and relief are activated as well (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Finally, the Bridge to Thriving is not a linear pathway or a one-time journey, but rather a way to measure environments where people can flourish and exist in spaces where there is analysis of what is needed to flourish, wholeness and a well-lived life (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Figure 2.2 illustrates the Bridge to Thriving Framework.

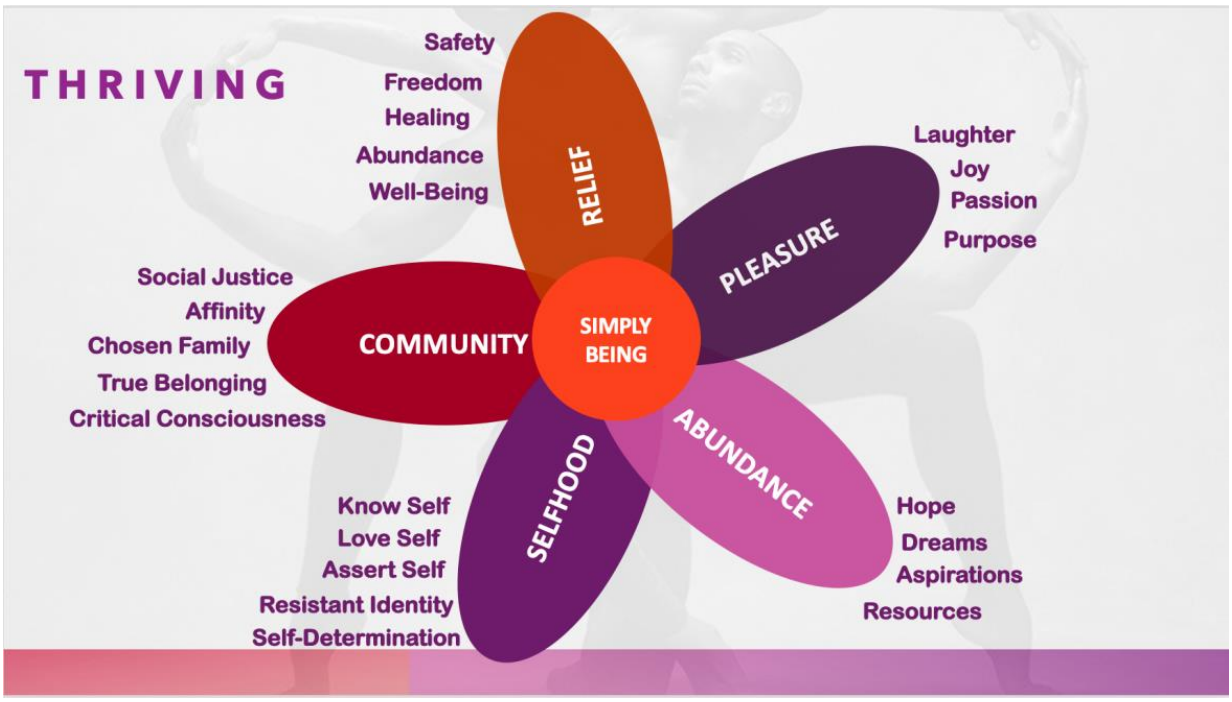

Figure 2.2: Bridge to Thriving Framework (Darling-Hammond, 2021)

To increase retention of Black female teachers, attrition issues mentioned earlier in this chapter need to be addressed. Tenets of Black Feminism and the Bridge to Thriving Framework can be used to create experiences and environments where Black female teachers can thrive. The connection of these concepts is illustrated in Figure 2.3. This framework combines concepts from the literature review and helped guide the study.

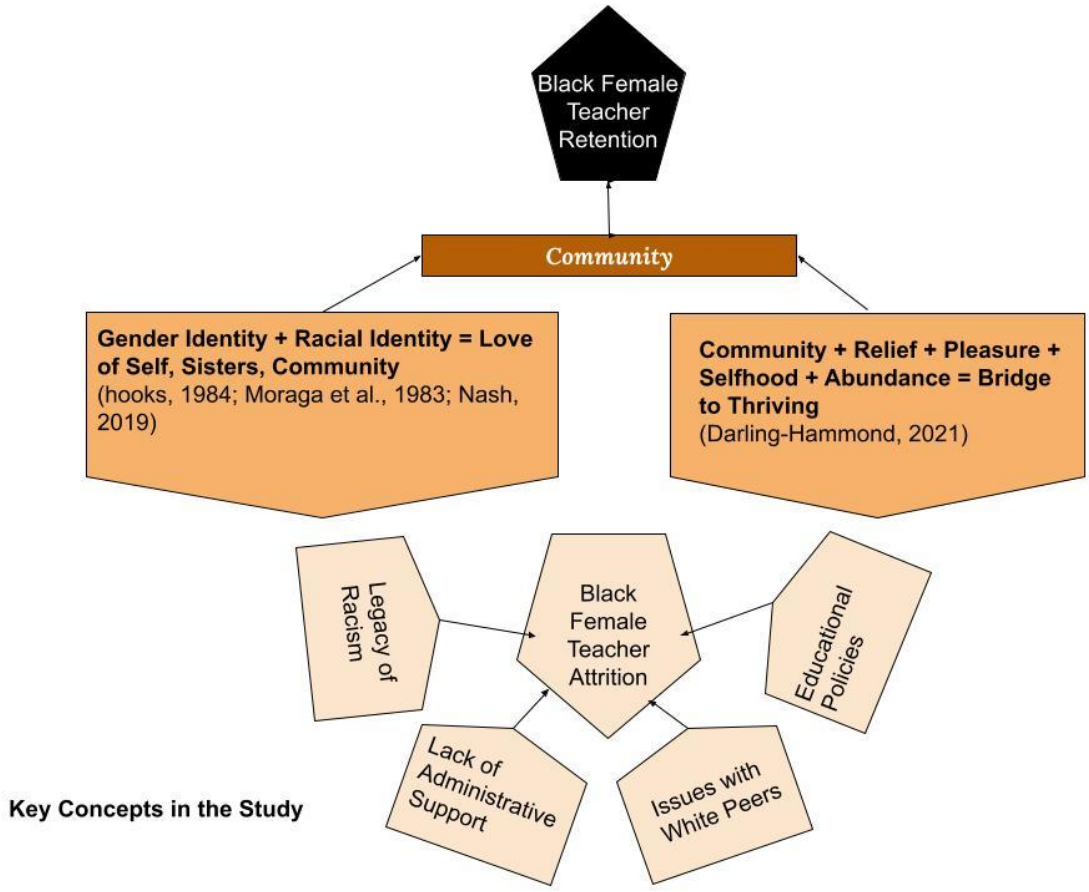

Figure 2.3: Black Female Teacher Retention

Figure 2.3 demonstrates how community serves as an umbrella for pertinent aspects affecting Black female teacher attrition and retention. Attrition occurs where there is a lack of community where racism, lack of administrative support, lack of peer support and educational policies interfere with career longevity. On the other hand, retention is linked to several aspects of community including acknowledgement, inclusion and support of gender and racial identities and experiences in addition to a variety of support systems that provide relief and pleasure.

Summary and Conclusion

The diversity of students currently in public schools is increasing steadily as the number of teachers of color, particularly Black teachers, fails to remain comparative (California Department of Education, 2022b). This lack of diversity in the teaching force is a factor adding

to lower achievement rates of students of color (Carter Andrews et al., 2019). Black teachers bring traits to schools that benefit all students and elevate the success of Black students though encounters with racist personnel and policy are limiting potential student performance (Bristol et al., 2019).

Retention of Black teachers is essential for the success of all children. Black teacher presence has demonstrated increased positive outcomes for struggling students historically, as well as today. However, a variety of factors are causing Black teachers to leave the profession at higher rates than their white peers. People of color cannot be solely responsible for racial justice issues; however, white suburban avoidance of racial issues cause concerns of Black teachers to be silenced and ignored (Lewis, 2001). A commitment to shared perspective needs to be part of the organizational structure to ensure all teachers contribute to the educational arena (Mabokela et al., 2003). More research on the experiences of teachers of color needs to be conducted to see how all stakeholders play a role in Black teacher retention (Campoli, 2017). All stakeholders must address color lines, racial gaps, and racial consciousness using common language that allows for all to get involved via personal reflection, keep the spotlight on race, and engage multiple racial perspectives (Singleton, 2015).

Additional research is needed to capture factors that encourage Black female educator retention. In looking at the racialized and gender influenced experiences Black female teachers have been subjected to and have moved beyond, practices that aim to reduce these issues and replicate factors that help overcome them can be collected. Attention to Black identity and factors contributing to happiness can help isolate the elements of thriving that increase Black female educator longevity. Information gathered can contribute to the literature on retention by

challenging current focuses on negative aspects and offering practices that can influence attrition.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter discussed issues Black female teachers have faced in K-12 settings. Additional research that focuses on assets the Black teacher identity brings into the classroom is needed to capture, support, and replicate structures to counter Black teacher attrition. Using their own voices, an analysis of professional conditions and support systems Black female K-12 teachers who have stayed within the K-12 arena needs to be completed in order to assess what contributes to longevity (Seidman, 2019). External factors supporting their staying in K-12 education can be gathered and recreated in teacher preparation and in schools across the country.

The problem motivating this research is illustrated below in Figure 3.1. Also known as the Ishikawa diagram, this Fishbone diagram was used to identify root causes of the problem by looking systematically at the various causes that created or contributed to the problem (Ilie et al., 2010). Utilizing the Fishbone diagram helped address the multiple issues raised in the literature review. The process of creating the Fishbone diagram included identifying the problem and primary and secondary drivers of the problem (Ilie, 2010). Derived from improvement science, this process assisted the integration of knowledge and experiences of Black female veteran teachers and what can be garnered from them in terms of increasing their happiness and longevity in the profession (LeMahieu et al., 2015). Improvement science also guided me, as the researcher, to focus on variations in performance, see the system producing outcomes by defining the problem, analyze it and create questions that might help uncover necessary information to solve the problem of Black female teacher retention (LeMahieu, 2015).

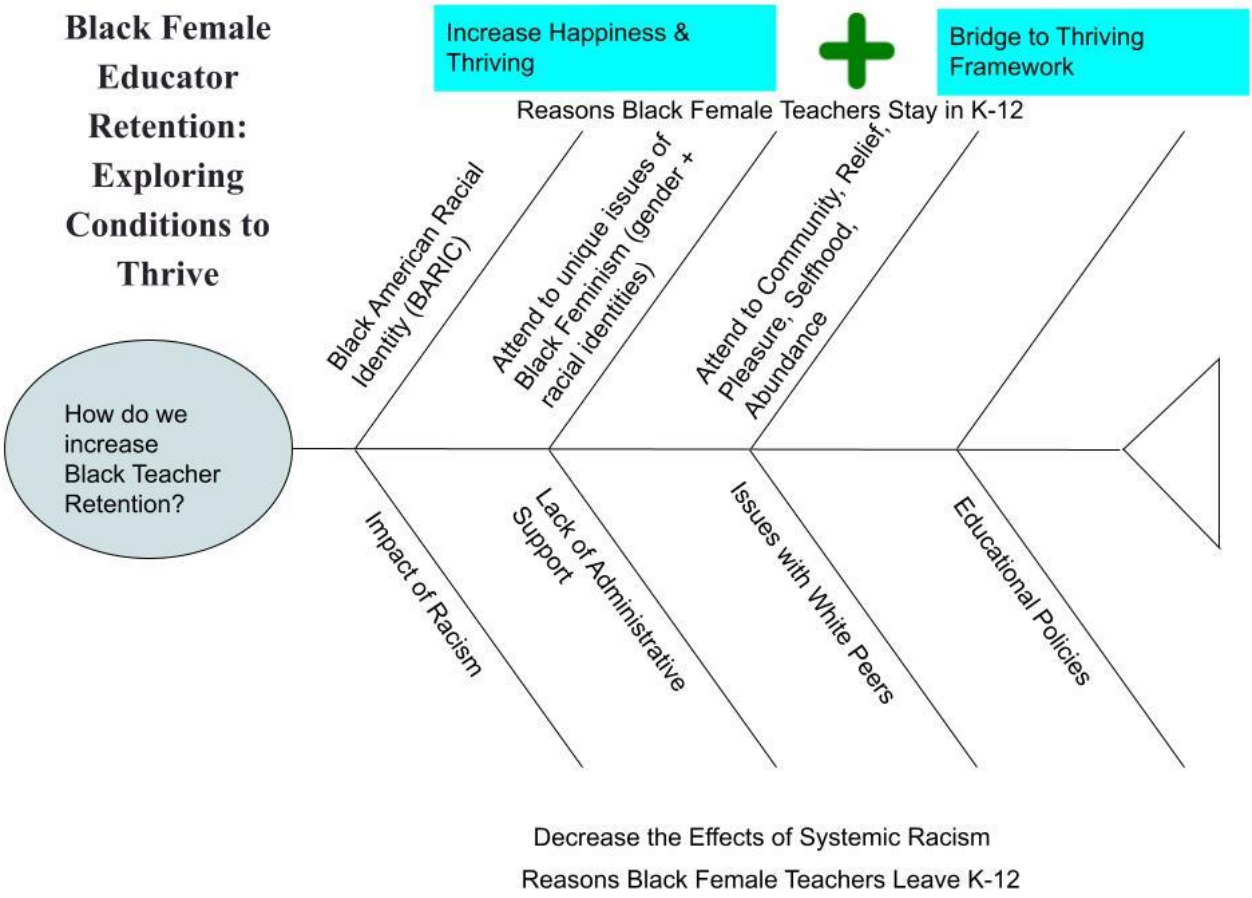

Figure 3.1: Black Female Teacher Retention Factors

To reiterate, the research questions guiding this study were:

How has being Black and female shaped teachers' experiences and longevity in the profession?

A. What experiences do Black female teachers describe as being based on historical or systemic racial and gender dynamics?
B. What factors do Black female teachers attribute to their remaining in the profession in spite of experiences they perceive to be due to their race and or gender?
C. How do Black female teachers define professional thriving in K-12 environments

and what do they attribute to their own sense of thriving throughout their careers?

This phenomenological study focused on seven self-identifying Black/African American female educators with 10 or more years of experience in K-12 public education. Their schools and districts were predominantly white settings. A series of two interviews was conducted with each participant to capture lived experiences in the K-12 environment with emphasis on assets and supports, both intrinsic and extrinsic, that have contributed to their longevity in the profession (Seidman, 2019). This chapter will begin with an explanation of phenomenology and the reasoning behind this approach to gathering data. Then, I discuss study design, participants, and data collection. Analysis, procedures, and limitations of the study are represented as well.

Study attributes in relation to theoretical frameworks are detailed in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Study Attributes in Relation to Theoretical Frameworks

Study Attribute	**Black Feminism**	**Bridge to Thriving Framework**
Qualitative	X	X
Research Questions	X	X
Participant Voice	X	X
Interview Protocol	X	X

Qualitative Phenomenology

Qualitative research methodology was selected because it seeks to see the world in terms of how the participants experience a phenomenon and an analysis of how these situations and events influence others (Maxwell, 2013; Mertler, 2019; Rudestam et al., 2015). Qualitative research also seeks to understand the participant's perspective, how they construct meaning, how they understand their context, how they process these experiences and what the local causalities might be (Maxwell, 2013; Mertler, 2019; Rudestam et al., 2015; Seidman, 2019). Additionally,

qualitative research seeks to improve existing practices by recounting narratives to see how the sample population makes sense of their experiences (Seidman, 2019). In inquiring about the factors that contributed to Black teacher longevity, phenomenological research further provided the opportunity to analyze Black teacher experiences and describe those experiences and the nature that connects ideas (Rudestam, 2015).

Like qualitative research overall, phenomenological research seeks to interpret the individual perspectives to collect subjective experiences of being a Black female teacher in K-12 environments (Maxwell, 2013; Mertler, 2019). Phenomenological inquiry allowed me to maintain close contact with participant experiences and to garner a subjective understanding (Rudestam, 2015; Seidman, 2019). This allowed me to connect ideas broadly across experiences as I collected data through open-ended interviews, completed analysis and incorporated reflection (Rudestam, 2015; Seidman, 2019).

Participant Selection

Seven Black female veteran educators were selected for interviews in an attempt to identify their perceptions and associated meanings of their experiences by actively reliving them (Mertler, 2019). Since it is estimated that 40-50% of new teachers leave the profession in their first five years, selected participants had over 10 years of experience in K-12 settings ensuring they have a breadth of experiences to draw from (Brown et al., 2018). Initially, this study sought to focus solely on K-12 classroom teachers, however, finding veteran Black female teachers with 10 years of experience proved unsuccessful, so criteria was expanded to include educators in administrative roles within K-12 systems who had been classroom teachers as well. Black women were the focus of the study because there are unique and subtle forms of racial and gender discrimination plaguing Black female teachers (Rauscher et al., 2017). The preferred

school and district environments were predominantly white suburban settings due to racialized dynamics that often occur in these environments (Frank et al., 2021; Kohli et al., 2017). Female teachers contend with having sexualized interactions with male colleagues (Rauscher et al., 2017). Therefore, Black women have unparalleled challenges they encounter through their very presence in K-12 environments.

Participants' ages at the time of interviews ranged from 40-60. All had a minimum of eight years as a classroom teacher with the greatest being 23 years. Total years in education ranged from 10 to 25. Six of the seven participants worked and resided in Southern California, and all were employed by medium to large sized public school districts at the time of the interviews. The seventh participant lived and worked in a suburban area of Northern California and was employed in a comparable school district to the other participants.

Recruitment for participants included professional recommendations and snowball sampling. Professional recommendations from school site administrators, district officials and teacher educators were solicited via email (see Appendix A). Twelve suggested participants were contacted via email and sent an invitation to participate. 8 agreed to participate though scheduling became an issue for 1, leaving 7 (see Appendix B). For the purposes of this study, Black and female were determined by self-identification. Finding experienced, Black female educators proved to be challenging as most identified by professional associations had less than ten years teaching or had left the K-12 arena.

Historic Black women’s names were chosen as pseudonyms for the participants and participant demographics are noted in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Participant Demographics

Name (Pseudonym)	Age (Under 40, under 50, under 60)	Current Occupation	Highest Degree	Years as a Classroom Teacher	Years in Education
Coretta	Under 60	Teacher	PhD	17	17
Harriet	Under 50	Teacher	BA	10	10
Marian	Under 50	District Administrator	MA	8	17
Mary	Under 60	Teacher	BA	23	23
Maya	Under 50	School Site Administrator	MA	21	25
Michelle	Under 50	District Administrator	EdD	19	25
Rosa	Under 50	District Administrator	EdD	6	20

Data Collection

Data were collected via a series of two in-depth interviews with each participant. Interview data was collected using a protocol informed by Seidman's (2019) Three Interview Series. Seidman advocates for interviews with sequential foci based on life history, details of the lived experience and reflection on the meaning (Seidman, 2019). For the purposes of my study, I adapted this format into a two-interview series with the first having a goal of seeking life history and lived experiences. The second interview included reflection, meaning making and in essence, member checking (Seidman, 2019). This interview series fostered rapport and created a relationship where discourse was more of a controlled conversation than an interview. Interview dialogue, though friendly in nature, was filled with respect, attention, and focus, rather than familiarity (Seidman, 2019). Appendix C includes the interview protocol.

The theoretical frameworks of Black Feminism (Nash, 2019) and the Bridge to Thriving (Darling-Hammond, 2021) were used to shape interview protocols. Question themes were intended to reveal experiences related to race and gender as well as the participants' perceptions about these experiences as is the basis of Black feminism. Additional questions that sought to capture elements of thriving and thus, longevity in the profession, were aligned with the Bridge to Thriving Framework tenets.

Participants were encouraged to answer questions with their classroom teacher experience in mind. Open-ended questions inquired about life history and gathered data on how participants made sense of lived experiences. This was followed by a section of questions about their teaching careers. The final section of the protocol addressed the concept of thriving and self-reflection. The second interview protocol probed more deeply into content revealed in the first interview including particular attention to Black feminism.

Second round interviews were conducted approximately three weeks after original interviews. Interview questions included clarification on demographic information and a request for expanded detail about previous responses given. Responses were also repeated for participants for member checking the collected information. Interviews were 20-30 minutes and offered the opportunity to add any information participants thought valuable to the study.

Interviews illuminated the relationship between the participants and the K-12 environments in which they worked. Participants shared details of their educational lives to capture school and district level climate and policies beneficial to keeping Black female teachers in environments where they flourished and stayed in the field (Kun et al., 2017). Examining positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments helped to address how Black female teachers describe the contribution of internal and external factors on their

decision to remain in the profession. This holistic approach to viewing phenomena and emphasis on description and meaning making was best suited to make sense of the experiences of Black female educators (Rudestam, 2015).

As noted above, the focus of questions was modeled after Seidman's (2019) three interview series in that they included questions about life history, details of lived experiences as Black female K-12 educators, reflections on the meaning of those experiences and the impact they had on decisions to stay in the profession. Thriving related questions examined teachers' accessibility to flourishing in the K-12 environment. It was important to distinguish remaining versus flourishing in the K-12 arena as merely existing is not an attribute of thriving. Questions addressed tenets of Blackness, gender identity, and lived teaching experiences. The interview protocol, located in Appendix C, contains questions that were pilot tested and revised to ensure questions solicited answers that most closely addressed the research questions (Maxwell, 2013). Appendix D charts the connections between research and interview questions.

While interviewees were given the option of meeting in person or via videoconferencing, all but one participant chose to meet virtually due to the prevalence of Covid-19 during the period of the interview window. With the participants' permission, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim for further analysis. With explicit permission from the participants, and in full compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines, data was collected and stored. All participant contact and consent forms can be found in Appendices B, E and F. Saved data from interviews included participant pseudonyms and identifiers were removed upon no longer having a need to re-contact participants. All interview-related electronic data was saved on an external hard drive that is password protected with data encryption. Any paper notes or other material collected were stored securely in a locked cabinet in my home.

Data Analysis, Validity, and Reliability of Data

All data were collected through two semi-structured interviews with individuals in person or via videoconference. Data were audio recorded and transcribed via Rev.com. After being checked for accuracy, participant demographics were collected and transcripts were analyzed in a series of coding passes (Maxwell, 2013; Rudestam, 2015). In vivo coding was followed by two rounds of descriptive coding. After review of each transcript, memos were written on what was seen in the data and what tentative ideas and themes were prevalent (Maxwell, 2013; Mertler, 2019). Memos also served to reflect on my research goals, methods, theory, connections to my prior experiences and interaction with the participant during the interview (Maxwell, 2013). Narrative summaries of each interview and of connections across interviews were also used to capture the context of the data (Maxwell, 2013; Rudestam, 2015). This served as a constant comparative method where emerging theories were checked and rechecked (Maxwell, 2013; Rudestam, 2015).

A codebook was created to organize data. Demographic information of each participant was charted, and open codes were sorted into broad categories grouped by race, gender, feminism, and thriving. Each of the 17 codes created was counted for frequency and were collapsed into themes connected to tenets of Black Feminist Theory and the Bridge to Thriving Framework as is noted in Table 3.3. A third round of coding occurred to check for accuracy and determine areas for further inquiry in the second round of interviews. A fourth round of coding occurred with the second set of transcripts yielding themes and or sub themes reflecting the literature review and theoretical frameworks (Maxwell, 2013; Mertler, 2019; Rudestam, 2015). A tally chart was created to connect themes to participants and the most prevalent codes were noted. Transcripts were reviewed a third time and coded and sub coded for racial and gender

identity, school and student community, and community, abundance, and self. The 17 themes were then connected to racial and gender identity as components. Black Feminism addressed RQ 1 and the Bridge to Thriving Framework, RQs 2 and 3.

Table 3.3 presents a summary of research questions and related themes and sub themes as was reflected in the memos, narrative summaries, and code analysis.

Table 3.3: Summary of Research Questions and Related Themes/Sub-themes

Research Question	**Themes/Framework**	**Sub Themes/Codes**
What experiences do Black female teachers describe as being based on historical or systemic racial and or gender dynamics?	Black Feminism	Racial Identity Love for Self Love for Sisters Love for Community Gendered Identity
What factors do Black female teachers attribute to their remaining in the profession in spite of experiences they perceive to be due to their race and or gender?	Security in Community/Bridge to Thriving	Sense of Purpose Mentorship Sense of Belonging Abundance Selfhood
How do Black female teachers define professional thriving in K-12 environments and what do they attribute to their own sense of thriving throughout their careers?	Quest for Professional Relief & Pleasure/Bridge to Thriving	Sense of Purpose Pleasure Relief

Validity

To ensure validity, peer debriefing was conducted with my dissertation committee chair to review and critique the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data (Mertler, 2019). Member checks via second interviews occurred to ensure I represented participant ideas accurately (Mertler, 2019). Reflexivity was an additional measure I used to ensure validity. My detailed notes including my own preliminary thoughts, observations, and interpretations were well documented throughout the process (Mertler, 2019).

Limitations

Generalizability

It is important to note limitations of this study. This qualitative study carefully examined the lived experiences of seven Black female veteran educators to learn how they perceived race and gender influenced their work experiences, why they remained in education and what they believed professional thriving might look like in terms of their careers and those of other Black female educators. Since data was solely collected using individual interviews, findings were based on what the participant remembered and chose to share, and no efforts were made to observe the participant in practice to corroborate those experiences (Maxwell, 2013). The scope and sequence of this study was limited due to its size and was not intended to conclude with a collection of all experiences of Black female educators (Maxwell, 2013). Educators in this study lived in the same state and worked in districts with similar demographics. Additionally, the participants each were in environments where they were the minority in terms of staffing.

Although the group of educators was small, significant data were gathered. The voices of Black female educators have been diminished and sometimes silenced due to existing colonial structures leading to a void of information in the literature. Interviews with the seven participants produced multiple connections and themes regarding protective factors that contribute to Black

female teacher longevity. Each participant's story provided unique insight into what participants attributed to their retention in the K-12 environment.

The goal of qualitative research is not to generalize a population, but rather better explain a phenomenon by generalizing at the level of theory (Maxwell, 2013). This study served to better explain the lived experiences of a subset of Black female educators and it is recommended this study be replicated to offer additional nuanced experiences to the body of literature. Although it is recommended this study be replicated, due to its qualitative nature, the findings of this study cannot be generalized. Attempts to generalize these findings among all Black female educators in all Black settings would not be recommended. The unique dynamics of Black teachers in white educational spaces needs to be considered. The goal of the study was to better understand the lived experience of this group of educators to benefit existing research and practice (Maxwell, 2013). The limitation of the small number of participants was mitigated by the sheer need to hear the voices of any Black female educators (Maxwell, 2013). Their voices are absent from much of the existing literature and the insight garnered by this group of participants greatly contributes to the field.

Researcher Positionality

Since the instrument of choice in a qualitative study is the researcher themselves, it is important that I disclose my positionality (Rudestam et al., 2015). I am a member of the community the participants are part of. I identify as a Black female educator with over 20 years experience in K-12 education. I have a plethora of firsthand experience with a variety of race-related interactions in my years as an educator prompting the desire to conduct this research. I worked in six K-12 schools in two states for a period of 21 years and in all but 5 years, I have been the only Black staff member on campus. I have been called out, singled out, overly relied

on, blamed, and seen as a saving grace to provide support and resources to white teachers, white administrators and students of color. I have had parents request their child be moved out of my English class due to stereotypes of Black people and African American Vernacular English. I have been responsible for high visibility roles like Student Activities Director and Lead Teacher while having parents and staff either feign support for my hard work or hidden their surprise as I excelled. I have been afraid to wear natural hairstyles and hid my affiliations with ethnocentric activities I participated in outside of school. Yet, I remained because I knew it was beyond my personal needs but for the students and all our futures. My personal experiences drive this research.

Throughout the research process, I avoided power differentials by disclosing the purpose of my study and ensuring participants my current employment in teacher education was not related nor affiliated with their employers. I held reflexive discussions with peers to help maintain transparency as well. By employing both peer debriefing throughout the research process and member checking upon drafted portions of the interview, I made every attempt to allay this risk (Maxwell, 2013).

My positionality also required the need to attend to potential confirmation bias. I needed to ensure I did not create deliberate versus spontaneous case building to counter human tendency to create preliminary hypotheses based on early findings (Nickerson, 1998). Member checking via second interviews served to address potential bias and allow participants the opportunity to clarify or correct any issues (Mertler, 2019). Additionally, careful attention to interview protocol built from close connection to my theoretical frameworks worked alongside my transparency of positionality to protect from confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998). My positionality and familiarity with the experiences of the participants proved to be a resource and allowed

participants to open more fully during their interviews. In fact, I believe my proximity to their own experiences, both professional and personal, allowed them to be more candid and forthcoming with me than had our identities been less historically connected.

Summary

Using phenomenological qualitative research, the purpose of this study was to deduce what internal and external factors contribute to Black female teacher longevity in spite of the negative environments often found in K-12 schools. Further, I sought to investigate how the intersection of Black identity, Black female identity, and the concept of thriving could create optimal conditions for Black female teachers. Study design was tightly aligned to research theory to best gather data to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This study used the lenses of Black Feminist Theory (BFT) and the Bridge to Thriving Framework (BTF) to examine the lived experiences of seven Black, female veteran educators with ten or more years of experience in education to note what they attribute to their longevity in K-12 education. For the purposes of this study, Black Feminism was seen as affective, or the felt experience combining the intellectual, theoretical, creative, political, and spiritual traditions of what it means to be Black and female (Nash, 2019). Further, Black femininity is described as *love politics* which is a nod to a Black woman's healthy love of self, her Black sisters, and the Black community as a larger unit within a broader society (Nash, 2019). As such, the intersectionality of Blackness and womanhood have unique attributes that contribute to understanding the lived experiences of Black female educators.

The Bridge to Thriving Framework (Darling-Hammond, 2021) was used to describe five attributes, and each can be used to define and assess thriving. These included community, selfhood, abundance, pleasure, and relief. *Community* includes chosen family and a sense of belonging, affinity, social justice and created family (Darling-Hammond, 2021). *Selfhood* includes love of self, knowing self and determination (Darling-Hammond, 2021). *Abundance* and *Pleasure* include hopes, resources, laughter, and joy (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Finally, *Relief* encompasses a sense of safety, place of healing, overall well-being, and freedom (Darling-Hammond, 2021). To connect these frameworks to the participants, there were key attributes to this phenomenological study design that reflected this connection.

This chapter summarizes data collected from two semi-structured interviews that were designed to explore the lived experiences of seven Black female veteran K-12 educators. Emphasis on their gendered and racialized experiences and how they affected their careers was

explored. Prior to a discussion of themes that arose from participant interviews, portraits of each of the participants at the time of interviews are provided. Each participant was purposefully given a pseudonym reflecting a Black female civil rights leader. Prior to introducing the participant, a quote that represents the philosophy of both the named leader and the participant is highlighted.

Participant Overview

Coretta Scott King - "The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

At the time of the interview, *Coretta* was a 17-year veteran high school teacher born, raised, and residing in a largely populated urban area in Southern California. Community and compassion were two of her guiding principles. She firmly believed, "We're thriving when we are allowed to expand our capacity and carve out areas that turn us on as educators." She was a Psychology major who fell into teaching after realizing the hardships of her future clients were too much to bear emotionally. While working on her Master's in Education, Coretta realized her love for research and continued through to earn her Ph.D. She attended a medium sized, public, predominantly white university (PWI), transferred to a small, private PWI, then graduated from a large, public university. Coretta had no intention of becoming a teacher, and her teacher licensure was through an alternative pathway. She had no desire to leave the classroom for administrative work citing her advocacy for her students and agency to contribute to her school as reasons why.

Harriet Tubman - "I go to prepare a place for you."

Harriet has been speaking up through her entire career. At the time of the interview, she was a 10-year veteran middle school teacher born, raised, and currently residing in Southern

California. She grew up in an urban area and lived and taught in a suburban area. She has a bachelor's degree in English and went through a traditional teacher preparation program. Harriet attended a small sized, private PWI. Prior to becoming a teacher, Harriet served as juvenile correctional officer, classroom paraprofessional and preschool teacher. Thus, she had experience with children ages three through seventeen. Although Harriet had been approached regarding moving into administration, she chose to stay in the classroom with students because she felt it was there she could best offer support for her students. She stated, "If you want to keep [Black women] here, then my suggestion will be to hear our voices, watch what we do and learn from our years of experience…And if you want us to stay here, then sit down, be quiet and listen."

Marian Anderson - "It is my honest belief that to contribute to the betterment of something, one can do it best in the medium through which one expresses oneself most easily."

Marian had 17 years of experience in education with eight of those being as a classroom teacher. She has used her voice to speak on behalf of students whose voices were rarely represented. She believed her "lived experiences, the experiences of my ancestors need to come out when we're at these [academic administrative] tables…making decisions about Black and brown kids." She served as a district administrator in a suburban area in Southern California. Marian went into administration to "have a seat at the table" where decisions about Black and brown children were being made. She was from a large urban area in the Midwest and moved to Southern California in middle school. She attended a medium sized, public university earning a degree in Sociology. She took an alternative pathway to earn her single subject teaching credentials to finance herself through school. Doctoral work was in progress.

Mary McCloud Bethune - "We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends."

Mary stated, “I stay because I see that I can make a difference…I feel like I’ve invested…in the community, in the school…I love the families…I love the kids.” This love was evident in the fact that *Mary* had been an elementary classroom teacher for 23 years in the same part of an urban city. Ironically, when she came from the Caribbean side of Central America, where she grew up, she had no plans to go into education. After earning a business degree at a medium sized, public university, Mary entered an intern program where bilingual teachers were needed. Mary has remained at her urban, high needs school since her second year of teaching. She never seriously entertained going into administration and felt she had more impact working directly with students in classrooms.

Maya Angelou - “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

This comfort and sense of belonging is something *Maya,* a middle school principal with 25 years of experience in the educational arena, strove to recreate on her campus. She had the experience where she “was able to walk into a place where it was okay to be me,” and, “didn’t have to put on airs because the majority of everyone was like me or they were allies to the point where we felt super comfortable with one another.” She remained in the field to create that environment for others. Twenty-one of her years in education were spent teaching in an urban part of Southern California where she also grew up. Maya went into administration to have influence over decisions affecting a larger number of students. She earned a liberal arts degree and her teaching credentials from a small, private PWI in that same part of Southern California.

Her master's degree and administrative credential came from private universities in the area. Maya always wanted to become a teacher and she held several positions within the K-12 school system prior to becoming an administrator.

Michelle Obama - "Find people who will make you better."

Michelle had 19 years of teaching experience and was serving as a district administrator to shine light on students who have not had their talents seen or assumed. Her 25 years in education began with an alternative pathway into teaching after realizing Psychology was not the field for her. Her family circumstances had her moving every couple years so she didn't connect with any part of the country. Her undergraduate experience was at a medium sized, public PWI in Southern California. She completed her master's at a similar school in the same region where she also earned her doctorate. She has remained in education despite never having been in "a space that assumed my greatness," or where she, "could collaboratively work with minds that assumed the best of themselves and the best of me." Michelle moved to administration to effect change on a broader scale.

Rosa Parks - "I would like to be remembered as a person who wanted to be free ... so other people would be also free."

Sense of community and support were very important to *Rosa* who, at the time of the interview, had 5 years of classroom experience and 20 years in the educational field. She stated, "Black women need mentorship and... community sisterhood, not just a mentor...let's meet and talk like sisterhood, give me the real dirty...pull me up when you see I'm slacking so that I can actually make it right." Rosa moved from the classroom into administration when she saw the need for people of color to influence policy change. Her most recent role had her serving as a district administrator and she has held many positions in roles that support teachers. Rosa moved

to a suburban area in Northern California during high school from an island in the Caribbean. Rosa attended small, private PWIs for both her undergraduate and graduate degrees and attended a large, private PWI for her doctorate.

Core Themes

Through the lenses of BFT and BTF, the data collected in this study were analyzed to achieve three core aims. The first was to highlight the unique experiences of Black female veteran educators and highlight how the intersectionality of being Black and female has been experienced. Secondly, the study adds to the body of asset-based scholarship on factors that have enabled Black female educators to remain in the profession. The final aim was to determine what thriving might look like for these individuals who have proved their longevity.

The remainder of this chapter addresses core themes in their relationship to the research questions. The overarching research question was *How has being Black and female shaped teachers' experiences and longevity in the profession?* Sub-questions will be examined, and each set of themes will be identified, defined and discussed. Core themes are charted in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Core Themes

Research Question	Core Themes
What experiences do Black female teachers describe as being based on historical or systemic racial or gender dynamics?	Family/neighborhood support Experiences with school staff based on race/gender Experiences with peers based on race/gender Stereotypes of gender roles
What factors do Black female teachers attribute to their remaining in the profession in spite of experiences they perceive to be due to their race and or gender?	Stay for child advocacy Stay due to positive community (coworkers, cultural connections, allies, sense of belonging) Mentorship Sense of purpose/agency
How do Black female teachers define professional thriving in K-12 environments and what do they attribute to their own sense of thriving throughout their careers?	Voice, agency, and authenticity Safe spaces Opportunities and support

What Experiences do Black Female Teachers Describe as Being Based on Historical or Systemic Racial Dynamics?

Being Black is hard, being a Black woman is harder and being a Black female educator, especially during a pandemic, adds its own challenges. Black Feminist Theory (BFT) addresses the intersectionality between experiences of Blackness and how the experiences of Black women are unique to their white peers. BFT includes the analysis of love of self and how it interplays with love of sisters. In terms of this study, sisters refer to other Black female educators, and the community, including allies in the workspace. Experiences of Black female educators are deeply interwoven within these concepts with the addition of the challenges all teachers face.

Participants all had significant experiences they attributed to their race and gender. Many reported their first notable experiences as children and young adults. All participants reported racially- and gender-influenced incidents once their educational careers began. BFT discusses love of self, sisterhood, and community and how they are essential components of a work environment conducive to longevity for Black female educators. Participant stories revealed the importance of community in creating a strong sense of self, identity, and support when racist and gendered issues occurred.

Community

Family and Neighborhood Participants most referred to their source of strength being in the form of community that is built around family. This family includes both bloodlines and found family with the most essential element being common heritage and/or racial identity. For some participants, family extended to include the entire neighborhood.

Rosa stated, "the biggest sense of community for me is always family…wherever family is." She included in-laws, neighbors, and friends within this community. She further defined this community as a group of people who have shared values, shared ways of communicating, problem solving with the sentiment that family includes, "people who are there for you, no matter what." She stated she had, "Lots of family, the community really was about a village raising children because everyone in the community looked out for kids…it was very community driven."

Like Rosa, Michelle attributed home as being a place with "the family that I made, and it is intentionally made joy." She spoke of the laughter, silliness and craziness that comes with the safety within home and that she looks for that type of workspace. She added that this type of joy has shown up in particular people, but never a group or in a workspace.

Mary spoke of her community as small and tightly knit where "life was simpler…you go to school, you come home, you do chores and then it was play time." She spoke of her home being filled with "fun and laughter." Mary's father traveled for work, and she spoke of being raised by her mother and many relatives she had close relationships with. Likewise, Marian spoke of growing up in the safety of a large extended family and that she "went to school with my cousins and just the people in the neighborhood."

Participants turned to family in terms of processing racialized experiences as well. Rosa spoke about her first experiences regarding racial identity. Since she grew up in a minority-majority community, she shared about the first-time race played a role in her identity when she had to register for American schools. She had never been asked about her race before and remembers hearing her mother respond to the question of what race are you as, "Well, I guess I'm Black, your dad's Black. So that's what you are." Similarly, Mary grew up on a small island in Central America where she attended schools taught in Spanish and English. She was raised in a community that believed, "Black is beautiful," so race did not become an issue until leaving her homeland.

Although the community was important in Marian's experiences as well, they were deeply rooted in the legacy of racist policies. She spoke of coming from "a third generation of poverty" where the community did not "know how to leverage resources to get ourselves out of our situation." She shared about her grandparents leaving the South in search of jobs while being forced to live in the projects within the confines of racial redlining. Marian left this community at age 12 for California where she reported her family had to, "make our own community connections."

Although participants grew up in varying places in the world, a commonality was a sense of safety and belonging within their homes and communities. Extended family, neighbors and the church community served as anchors where authenticity was nurtured. An additional source of community was found in the Black church. Coretta credits the Black church she attended "for 40 something years," as the place where she felt the strongest sense of community and that her, "church space is probably where I feel the safest." Harriet echoed this sentiment as she noted her greatest source of support came from her family and her church. She spoke of attending the same church with many of the same people almost her whole life. Though Harriet referred to herself as a "nerd" and "outcast," she spoke of seeing the "cool" church kids around town and the comfort she felt in having their support, when she "used to get picked on."

Schooling. Participants had varying yet equally influential experiences during their years in K-12 schools. For many of the participants, encounters with Black staff had meaningful influences on them. Ironically, school was also the first place racism was experienced for some participants as well.

For some, school was an extension of the caring communities in which participants lived, regardless of socioeconomic status. Rosa spoke of the partnership between home and school in that parents "didn't need to be as involved in the schools because it was very much understood that it was a partnership." Although she moved a lot due to being part of a military family, Michelle's comments were similar when she spoke about Mrs. Wall (pseudonym) and how this one Black teacher made her feel loved and supported. In fact, she stated, "I wanted in some way to make or help others feel the way Mrs. Wall made me feel," because she had the "power to make the people around her feel really good and safe." She added that, regardless of race," folks wanted to be around her." Similarly, though Harriet never had a Black teacher of her own, she

spoke of Ms. Green (pseudonym) who was her sister's teacher and would "find me and my sisters and my little brother…she always talked to us. I remember at one point she came to our house. Ms. Green was just really good to us."

Unlike the other participants, Coretta, Maya, and Rosa shared their experiences in majority-minority schools. Coretta stated, "almost all my teachers were Black every year." She related stories of adults that, "communicated…through the way they loved us." She described them as "loving," "tough," "funny as all get out," while "say[ing] things to us to correct behavior." Coretta mentioned feeling loved, cared about, and having high expectations set upon her and her classmates. She recounts her school being a place with classrooms where students, "didn't play and you weren't going to be cutting up in class." Coretta spoke about having a Black school leader in elementary school who she described as, "the stereotypical Black educator, that stereotype of tough, tough love." Maya shared similar experiences in that she attended a predominantly Black, community-based school where, "teachers treat[ed] us like family. So, I did not experience racism." She added that she was, "extremely supported by not only [her] African American teachers, but the white teachers, Mexican teachers, it didn't matter. It was just the culture of the school for adults to be supportive… like parental even, to the students." Maya also told of fond experiences with her Black teachers. She stated that experience, "probably affirmed it even more when I saw teachers who genuinely loved students and went above and beyond their contract just to be human for us…It was about just building relationships with students and helping them be better versions of themselves."

Rosa's international experience shared echoes of what other participants reported. She said her teachers and school leaders were, "people of color, primarily Black," and she attributes seeing role models of color as a pathway to her own career possibilities. Rosa spoke about her

school administrators and neighbors all playing a role in disciplining and encouraging children. She contrasted the experiences of her American cousins growing up with mostly white teachers and administrators and the feelings of discontent and disengagement they had with their respective school experiences. Once Rosa began schooling in the US, she did not have one Black teacher.

Marian shared similar positive experiences as she spoke favorably of her Black middle school English teacher. She stated, "She brought literature that wasn't always from the dominant narrative…and I really appreciated that. She credited that teacher with grounding her teaching practice and added, "I learned I could bring in other perspectives from English, from history, it doesn't have to be from this textbook." Marian also spoke highly of her Black AVID[1] teacher from high school who she was still in touch with. Marian also had experiences with stern disciplinarians. She spoke about her kindergarten teacher being African American, strict and punitive. While her principal was Black, he was someone to stay away from because, "the principal had the paddle in his office." She learned to take all things school seriously in order to stay out of trouble but does have fond memories of the extracurricular activities.

Conversely, participants also told of negative interactions at school that centered primarily on racial status. Michelle stated, "I went to 13 schools…just about a school a year…I was the one Black student in a lot of classrooms across the country, and I don't have fond memories of those classroom spaces." She spoke of an experience in third grade where a white teacher who thought she was being defiant took a stack of books and dropped them over her head. She spoke of getting a bee sting that same year and being told, "that's what you get for not

[1] AVID—Advancement Via Individual Determination—fosters a safe and open culture, high expectations for teachers and students, and collaboration in all classrooms (AVID, 2022).

listening," and the sting was not attended to until she went home. She told another story of another state where she was being introduced as the new student and the teacher pulled out a Halloween face mask from her desk drawer, put it on the back of her head and turned to write on the board. She told the students, "This is so I can see what all the n*ggers are doing." Michelle discussed this being the first time she'd heard that word directed at her and made the connection that it was a slur toward her. She added that she went home, told her parents, and her mother spent half the school year knitting in the back of the classroom because she didn't trust what was going on in the school.

Mary shared about the first time she had a racial experience and was truly surprised when it occurred. She noted her, "first encounter [with race] in fifth grade when one of my classmates called me Black…it was like a derogatory Black." She also detailed telling this girl, "You know my name," and that the girl showed her respect after being confronted.

As with the other participants, Harriet described a plethora of racialized experiences. She grew up in an entirely Black neighborhood though she moved away from there while in elementary school and found herself the "only Black kid," in the suburbs where her family was "severely below the poverty level." When recalling K-12 school experiences, Harriet shared, "that there were assumptions being made because I was this Black girl," who was from a Black urban area. Though she wanted her teacher to like her, "she felt unliked." She recalled a little boy calling her a "n*gger," and her getting in trouble, "for being a tattle tale." Harriet added that a couple years later, "I was the only Black girl in English class and [her teacher] literally told the whole class that I was not as smart as other girls in class. And that I was not going to be as successful as them." She added that she often wore her hair in braided hairstyles and that the

same teacher "used to call me a Rastafarian and he would call me these names and he would use a little fake island accent whenever I walked in the room," or when he called attendance.

Harriet added that her experiences at her private Christian university as an additional "jarring" space because she expected to find community in common religion but found it was instead, "just another white space." She found herself often in opposition to her classmates when she had to state, "I just wanna' clarify that every Black kid doesn't necessarily need your help…Let's be clear. Nobody in this class is smarter than me, nobody…I am not special. I am not like this special magic exception…You're just shocked because I'm intelligent and I'm Black." She mentioned other challenges with professors regarding course texts. She once told a professor, "This is blackface in a text," to which her professor responded, "I'm the alpha in this situation, because you know, this is the academic sphere, and I have two PhDs."

Like Harriet, Coretta grew up with a variety of racialized experiences. She grew up in the 1970s when bussing students from their segregated neighborhoods into white areas was en vogue. Prior to bussing, she shared that she "grew up in a predominantly Black neighborhood. Most of my life and my school, my elementary school was all Black." Upon arrival at the predominantly all white school she was bussed to, the Black bus driver pulled over and stated, "if I give you guys this sign, I want you guys to lay down in your seats…these white, these people, some of them don't want you guys out here and I've been told they may be protesting in front of the school." Coretta shared about being elected the first Black student body president and after the results came in, "somebody vandalized the school and wrote all over the school 'go home' and they had swastika signs all over the school." Coretta stated that there was a lot of, "what today we would call explicit and implicit bias," and "not being understood." Although she admitted these experiences helped her "learn to navigate in their world," that "maybe I was

hurt." It was the community of her fellow Black students that helped her navigate a school environment where, "they didn't have our pictures, they didn't have our memories."

Coretta's racialized experiences continued as she moved to a college she described as "very vanilla." She stated, "one of the reasons I left [that campus] was just the culture. It was like culture shock." Coretta recalled being at the library where a white man stopped her to ask, "why do you wear your hair like that?" and that she was wearing her hair, "like what the little monkeys who pick bugs off of each other do" and that she should, "go back to Africa." The following year, Coretta transferred to a PWI though the school and town were very segregated, so she had an all Black community and she, "didn't have white friends." For financial reasons, Coretta transferred again to a university in southern California that "had a thriving Black Student Union and Black studies department, probably one of the more progressive ones in the area." Her varied experiences were very racially polarized.

Maya also spoke of her college experiences at her PWI where microaggressions occurred frequently. She recalled an experience where she was in class with one other Black female and, "the professor would call me her name and her me and when we would correct her on it, she'd go, oh whatever. And so, we started calling her random names and then when she got upset, we'd say, oh, whatever…then it finally clicked to her."

After leaving the Midwest, Marian discussed the impact of no longer having a Black community filled with Black teachers. She described leaning on her love for education and reaching out to teachers, but stated, "it was challenging because my teachers were now white. I never had a white teacher before. I never had a Mexican teacher before. It was all these different…cultures in one space." Marian added that, "certain teachers…that kind of stereotype you and put you into certain subgroups, you know, because you're Black, because you're

female…They automatically assume that you're loud…you're ghetto until they see you talk, until they see your report card…until they hear where your family is coming from."

Each participant shared stories where their racial identity was the center of their experiences. Most spoke of positive experiences with their communities that included their homes and neighborhoods. They shared memories of the support they received and both formally and informally credited their sense of self to these communities. School experiences varied greatly dependent upon the presence of or respect for Black identities in these school spaces. Participants spoke highly of their connections to Black educators and supportive allies. Conversely, many participants shared their negative experiences. They alluded to the effect of these racialized experiences as they later discussed their reasons for staying in K-12 education despite the professional racial encounters that will be discussed below.

Professional Life: Race and Schooling

Experiences based on race continued into the participants' professional lives. Most reported the lack of community and sense of isolation they experienced as the one or one of a few Black or BIPOC teachers at a given campus. Assumptions and stereotypes many participants experienced in their youth were present in their workplaces as well. Other participants found themselves being the sole adult fighting on behalf of the students in their care.

Rosa referred to her racial ambiguity. Depending on her hairstyle or the audience she was with, she has been privy to conversations people thought they were having out of earshot of Black women. She also believes her lighter skin hue has afforded her privileges darker skinned Black women may not have had. She mentioned watching other Black women be reprimanded for speaking up about issues. She also discussed her own pushback and feeling like she was seen as a "good Black," who was present to check the diversity box. She reported pushback when

bringing up racial issues with efforts to silence her due to non-compliance. When Rosa "spoke in a way that challenges," she felt the resistance she was met with was due to leadership believing "that's not what we signed up for" when she was hired. She believed her role was to be "seen" as a diversity hire, but not heard in terms of change.

Michelle shared similar negative experiences as she recalled her first years teaching and having a white parent who did not want their child in her classroom. Michelle believed this parent's aim was to humiliate her in front of the other parents at Back to School Night by making an inappropriate comment to "slam" and "shame" her as a way of taking a "dig" and trying to "hurt" her. That parent refused to speak with her the entire year and only communicated via notes and emails despite Michelle's efforts to have an in-person conversation with her. Michelle also spoke about the absence of community when working on a team with four white women 20 to 30 years her senior. This group of teachers had been together for years and wanted Michelle to take their curriculum and, "go with their program." Michelle refused because she felt the content they had curated over the years to be "boring," "void of connection with kids," and "completely driven by the comfort of the teacher." Michelle spoke of their common age and racial identities being different from hers and how, "those relationships were intact."

Isolation was experienced by Marian as well. She spoke of early teaching experiences where she was the only Black teacher on campus, and because she had good classroom management, her classroom roster, "always had 42," while her peers had only 37 students. She spoke of many good experiences with her Black and brown children despite the makeup of the rest of the staff. Though there were no other Black adults, Marian spoke fondly of her students as she stated, "I love them just like I love my own kids…And we've been through the ups and downs…the good and the bad." She shared that she interacted with students about their traumas

and how she saw her white counterparts to be punitive. She gave the example of missed homework and the white teachers not knowing, “the trials and tribulations that they [students of color] go through to get to school.” She credited this misconnection with the fact that many of the white teachers were coming, “from a privileged perspective when these kids are just persevering just to get to the classroom.”

Mary’s commitment to student success was like her peers in that she believed herself to have, “high expectations for my students…no matter, I mean across the board.” While she was sometimes accused of being “blunt” and “too strict,” parents turned to her for guidance after seeing the relationships she had built with their children. She also spoke of the need to advocate for her students as children in her area, predominantly children of color and living in poverty, “lack the support” of the district and that “the district is just talk, talk, talk,” when it comes to policies that will help children.

Coretta spoke of her good fortune in beginning her teaching career where she had a supportive community that looked like her. She stated, “I had a lot of Black colleagues, most of them Black women.” She spoke about one of them being, “a really great teacher and I was glad I was able to befriend her because this was when I was starting to learn,” to become a teacher. Coretta also spoke of having a Black male mentor teacher who “was a very exceptional teacher.” She spoke of learning from both him and his experiences as a Black teacher as she described him as going into a school, “that was predominantly Black and low socioeconomic…and his students had tested so high on a state exam that the state came down and retested them because they thought he had cheated somehow. And it was a typical story. They scored higher.”

While Maya was able to work with a diverse, supportive staff, members, she stated her most challenging experiences were in roles outside of the classroom. Once she became an

instructional coach, she recalled the looks on people's faces, "when a Black woman showed up." She added, "I'm showing up in my district badge, I've signed in, I've done everything I'm supposed to do. And it was campus security who questioned me. Like, why are you here?" More than once she had to report the way she was received at school sites to her supervisor for her own protection.

Although classrooms have been the site of many racialized experiences, pursuits outside of traditional teaching responsibilities have been the source of racialized experiences as well. Harriet does equity training and has been a union representative in her district which has caused "all of [her] alliances [to be] gone" and that some of her peers began to "literally target [her] Black students and treat them like garbage." Harriet developed a safe space at school for Black children after sharing with her principal that, "Our Black kids are not being served...not only are they not being served, we're actively harming Black children…We seek out, target and destroy Black kids." She was met with accusations of reverse segregation, silence from those she thought to be allies and, "fallout at such a grand level." She stated, "it was horrifying the way that my peers just turned on me…and I didn't know how to deal with it."

Racialized experiences occurred in participants' professional lives in a variety of ways. For some, it was treatment by supervisors in the form of a lack of support or assumptions. For others it was isolation or ostracization from peers. A sense of community was supportive where it could be found.

Gendered Experiences

Black female educators have a unique relationship with femininity due to the intersectionality of race and gender in America. Participants discussed focusing on their Black identity over female identity and feminism as something for white women. Black feminism

focuses on this intersectionality and how love of self, sisters and community is at the forefront of Black women's consciousness. Growing up in and around the Christian faith also played a role in participants' gendered identities. Participants discussed being taught women were secondary to men yet attributed their success to a line of strong Black women even noting, "it was women within the church who were the doers."

Rosa defined feminism as, "celebrating the strength of women, the power of women, the beauty of women…just knowing that there isn't anything that we can't do." Like many of the participants, Rosa stated that she "was surrounded by strong women growing up." Rosa added, "whether we join the Black movement or the feminist movement, we've always been in that intersection. And…for me…I've always said, I will always join the Black movement before I join the feminist movement. "She also stated that she's only now thinking about the many gender related issues she faced because at the time, "I think most of my experiences with the gender part…went over my head because…I was at a small Baptist church which is very sexist." She expanded upon her church experiences as she stated, "The men are to lead and head things, but all the work was being done by women." Participants all saw strong, influential, supportive female figures as important components of their communities.

Rosa referred to the importance of her role as a mother, particularly of Black sons in America. She noted the murders of Trayvon Martin, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery and how their deaths stirred her as a mother. She said these events, "did more to just push me to not be afraid to speak out," and that she had, "to be able to speak out in a way that challenges," whether for her own or other people's children.

Coretta shared, "I was only keen to racial [identities] in my twenties. And now in my fifties, almost 60 now, I'm becoming this like feminist that I didn't know was in me." Racial

experiences dominated her schooling though Coretta also shared about gender-based experiences. She remembers a male student deciding to run for student body president when only females were on the ballot because, “we can’t have a girl president.”

Like Coretta, most of Maya’s obstacles were race-based rather than gender-based. Maya defined feminism as affirming “the greatness of women,” and that seeing, “the beauty in women and women affirming women definitely makes me a feminist.” She described the first team she was able to build as an administrator as a group of very supportive women of color where they “love on one another and uplift one another.” Maya spoke about the importance of community and that the physical space she has created for herself and her teachers creates an emotionally safe space. She added, “my immediate administrative office is where the best example of belonging and community resides. Stepping out of this office might be a whole different ball game, but here we love each other.” Maya also described tensions that arose due to what she described as addressing and correcting a white female teacher's harmful behavior toward a child of color and that teacher leading what Maya nicknamed a “coup” at the district office stating she was out of line as an administrator. Teachers from her school accused Maya of not supporting her staff and choosing the “side” of the parent when in fact, she was focused on “children in their class thriving” and how the relationship with that child (of color) happened the way the teacher had been “interacting on a daily basis.”

Harriet discussed gender roles in terms of male students she interacted with at her university. A male she thought to be a friend asked her, “why do you always correct the guys?” He added, “Dudes don’t like that…men do not like that.” As he further explained that she had to learn to be more, “gentle and soft,” she responded by telling him she was, “still every bit of woman, I just speak to all people the same.” She spoke of debates over religion and arguing

against, “implications of patriarchy and men throwing stuff on top of it to be able to dominate women.” Harriet also spoke of times when professionally, “Black men have fought me harder than anyone outside of white women,” because they are often concerned with their “role in the patriarchy.”

While Michelle was careful, “about any labels that [she] adopt[s],” she has been excluded based on gender. She named white men as being the greatest generators of pushback and questioning in her current role. She discussed the intersectionality of being Black and female and showing up as both. Michelle told a story of a leadership program for women administrators. Though she attended with her female boss, and one of the topics was how women can hold other women back, this same administrator questioned if she should pursue leadership. During a performance review, Michelle was met with,

> I question if this is the right chapter for you at this time. You are in a doctorate program, you’re a mother, your husband travels a lot. Um, I'm just wondering if this is the right timing for you and I said you know, that’s interesting because your question has nothing to do with my performance…are you saying this to my male principal colleague? Is there any question about him being a father? Is there any question about his wife working a lot, but this is what you’re telling me. I find it to be unfair, disrespectful, and everything opposite of what we have been sharing together in this learning space called women’s leadership.

Marian discussed stereotypes of Black women and stated her identity has been defined as such by others. She said she felt she’s always had to, “just look very strong, even though sometimes I’m carrying a lot on my plate, but that stone persona in my workforce can come off as those stereotypes that people…assume towards strong Black women…but I’m just trying to survive.” She described a balancing act between being seen as independent and strong, but not too strong as to not be listened to.

Participants accounted for experiences they attribute to gender from youth to career. They learned about societal expectations of women through the words and deeds of others. Some experiences were uplifting while others served as limiting obstacles. Through it all, the presence of a community of other Black women served as a system of support and strength. Overall, participants' lives, from childhood through professional careers have been filled with experiences they attribute to their racial and gender identities. A strong sense of community with people who looked like them served as a support system as they navigated a racialized world. Community was a source of support, strength and belonging that most participants had a difficult time cultivating in their professional lives. Gender identity came second to race according to the participants. However, assumptions and stereotypes about women did play a role in the participants' lives. Being Black and female added unique challenges into the contributions participants were committed to making in their careers.

What Factors do Black Female Teachers Attribute to Their Remaining in the Profession in Spite of Experiences They Perceive to be Due to Their Race and or Gender?

Participants shared several negative experiences about not having the support of communities that look like them or supported them. They shared examples of racialized incidents and those they attribute to gender. Participants also shared examples that highlight the additional complications that come with the intersectionality of being both Black and female in the community at large and in educational spaces. And yet, the participants represent a group of career Black female educators that remain in the field despite these experiences.

Themes that arose related to longevity in the profession include the concepts of community, self, and abundance from the Bridge to Thriving Framework (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Black female educators stay to support and advocate for students, particularly those that

are underrepresented. They also stay in environments where there is a supportive sisterhood and community they have found or created. Supportive mentorship was also credited with remaining at a school site or district. Allyship and supportive co-workers formed the final part of the community and will be discussed below.

Student Advocacy

Participants all shared about the positive influence of having teachers that advocated for them as children and the harmful things that occur when adult allies are not present. One commonality that spawned from these experiences was a sense of remaining in education for the students they serve. Part of why Rosa stays in education is to counter the experiences her American cousins had in schools that left them with "their overall attitudes towards teachers" as "somewhat disrespectful" in reaction to the way they were treated in schools. She knows the impact of not seeing yourself represented in texts or in the people teaching you. She mentioned the role of current events and their impact on students of color. She attributes this to teachers not teaching, "kids how to think critically," and her personal commitment to, "impact kids in a positive way," by influencing, "policy for kids in a larger setting…I believe we can make a difference." She adds that she wants, "kids to see themselves in me, I want teachers to see themselves in me as a leader."

This was reflected in Michelle's sentiments where she used her childhood experiences to fuel her career. She stated that she's trying to, "get rid of the folks that aren't showing up in those ways, because [they] are not serving," but are, "creating more harm." Michelle also attributed her longevity in the profession to being a mother. She discussed the influence of 12 years of compulsory school. She stated that,

> It's really important for me that my kids have knowledge of self because that's where you…are the legacy of something greater…I want that for my own kids,

> I should want that for all kids…in the service of a more humane place…so I stay in education in the hopes of if I'm gonna' spend my days on this earth, it's spending it so the generation that is waiting to live in these spaces lives in one that is more full of love and openness and curiosity and more critically looking at everything than we are now.

Michelle attributed her longevity to wanting to protect children from many of her own personal experiences. When recalling some of her childhood memories, Michelle stated,

> What to me is incredible is that as an educator now, I think about not the race part, but I think about you as an adult treating a child this way…That's not human, that's not what humans do. You know, this is a particular position where you are to care for young people who cannot care for themselves and that you have these adults in spaces that take that privilege…to demoralize…[and] you're still…as a child, just trying to put together who you are…And so how evil and sinister is that?

Harriet and Marian also shared that they stay in the profession in part, due to the desire to counter some of the negative experiences they faced. Harriet made connections to the power she held as a teacher and made a commitment to, "not perpetuate the same damage." Harriet added, "the kids would tell me what the [white] teachers were saying…it was heartbreaking." She went on to add, "there is no escaping the fallout. You have to sit there; you have to take all of it all the time. And if you don't, your children will. So, there's no escape." Harriet was hired to work with the "tough" aka Black kids due to her background as a correctional officer. She was praised for her "military control" of her classroom. Once she got to know the kids, she described them as her favorite class and that the love was mutual. She spoke about having, "these real conversations," with, "those boys that year." She added that she, "came in as a correctional officer, but I left as a teacher." This experience formed the basis of her commitment to stay in the classroom and be their Ms. Green. Harriet spoke of many classroom experiences and how she had created "their underground railroad." She remains in education because she, "can't take away one of the stops until I know that it's been replaced by another one."

Marian's longevity in education is to advocate for kids who look like her, especially those that came from places like where she did as was the case with Harriet. She stated, "I really want to make sure that kids that look like me, marginalized kids, get opportunities that I didn't get or can maneuver themselves in spaces where they may feel like they didn't belong. You know, that's where my passion is." Marian went on to discuss how she always had more kids on her roster than her peers because she had a classroom, "where kids could connect with me." She added, "I love being a teacher. I love being with kids and I felt like every place that I was at prepared me for the next place I was going to be… love them just like, I love my own kids and you're with them for six hours a day. And we've been through ups and downs, you know, the good and the bad." For these reasons, Marian stated, "we need more people to sit at the table and have those conversations on what is not working in the system." She added that we allow

> people from the dominant narrative and privileged places to make decisions on Black and Brown kids when they have no idea, like the traumatic spaces that we have been through and just the historical nature of like even how we came into education, you know? So you cannot sit here and say, well, this is gonna be equal for everybody. When some people have had like a 300-year head start.

Similarly, Mary credits her staying in the teaching profession, and at her particular site, because she "wants to make a difference." She added that she has "invested" in the community and school and that she "just love[s] the families down there. I love the kids and I think that's why I stay." Likewise, location was important for Coretta. She credited her longevity to her student-centered site because, "the school has made so many efforts to try to improve the school for the kids." She added, "I know the work that we do is grooming our next generation. And if I can be a part of that somehow in some even minute way, then to me, it's a win. And if that means getting a teacher to do a practice differently, because it affects the students differently, then that's that."

As with many other participants, Maya is connected to the importance of attending to the needs of all students, particularly those whose needs are often overlooked. She, like the others wanted to be "Whatever piece of the puzzle I can impart on them, then I'm going to try and do that." Participants recognize their roles as changemakers and sacrifice their own safety and security for the sake of the students both in their care and those coming.

Educator Agency

The participants discussed a strong sense of purpose in that fighting for equity was an assumed role added to their self-modified job description. Black feminism (Nash, 2019) describes this as a love of community, particularly for the youth. Despite being tired, isolated and often knowingly up against adversaries, the participants were committed to staying in the profession to address issues they knew no one else would. Participants felt the need to speak out against injustice knowing they might be putting themselves in professional jeopardy. They voiced a sense of purpose in that in many situations, theirs were the only voices to raise such concerns to potential decision makers. Rosa stated, "If I call out racism, if I call out inequities…I've seen leadership kind of take a seat back" and respond with, "we appreciate you, the diversity, but we didn't want that kind of diversity…so then you become a target." She uses this as inspiration as she states, "I'm at a stage where I'm going to be me…I have two sons and that has certainly changed my perception." She adds that she feels a sense of urgency and responsibility to, "call it when I see it." Rosa also discussed the need to remain in the profession due to the needs of the students. She recalled a specific student and stated she was reminded, "of when you don't see yourself in your teacher or you don't have a teacher you can connect with, what does that mean for our students?"

Michelle discussed having a "principal that either trusted us, or really was uninterested in

what we were doing." She added, "we could do what we wanted, when we wanted," and that they could have agency to do what they felt was best for kids. This came in the form of curricular and disciplinary decisions that were complementary to what her students needed, rather than punitive as could have been the case. Michelle expressed a personal commitment to make decisions on behalf of students she felt were often over disciplined and undereducated. This proved to be a driving force in her resolve to stay in education. She stated, "We know that we're making a difference. We know that we're connecting, and that's what we have to be satisfied with because we're not getting that confirmation on the outside."

Mary shared that she has "high expectations" for all her students, "no matter, I mean across the board," and that while some said she was too strict, she knew that high expectations led to students, "rising to the occasion." She told the story of a young student whose mother asked for parenting assistance because the mother said, "they love you…can you please speak to my child?" The mom came back later saying, "What did you say to her…Cause she came home and she apologized. And she told me that she loved me." Mary said this is because she has high expectations and holds students accountable. She has taught the children of former students and recognizes her style has seen much success over the years. She also spoke of her self-appointed role to help families understand how to advocate for resources. She has offered dance classes for students, GED courses for parents and opportunities for parents to, "just read for 10 minutes with their students or practice a math activity with their student." She noted how, "students started to become more productive and [put in] more effort because, 'wow, my mom is going [to school] too.'" Mary told of another student that touched her in a way she hadn't often considered. She stated, "I don't have a lot of Black students in my room…but I know this year…this little Black girl, she wanted to be in my room…And her mom was telling me she wished she can get you

because she wants to have for once in her life or for once in her elementary career…she would love to have a teacher that looks like her." Mary added, "I hadn't really thought about … how I would affect or influence other students, other Black girls, you know, but when she said that, that made me feel like, wow, okay, I can continue doing this."

Coretta spoke of the agency she had on site. She spoke of the addition of both journalism and theater departments and that responses when she asks for things are, "let's see how we can make that happen." She added that she found it rewarding to work in an organization, "that instead of always finding reasons why you can't do something, they try to find reasons to, you know, make it happen. And I love that." She worked with a group of people that believed Black and Brown students should have the same things as the white students at other schools. Her administrators worked to make these things come true.

School/Community Connections

One of the common reasons participants attribute to their ability to remain in education is finding or recreating a community. These are relationships that mirror the support systems participants discussed as an important part of their foundational experiences. This community is a nod to those that recognize or can relate to the unique issues that come with the intersectionality of being Black and female in a traditionally white female, white male led industry.

Rosa spoke about occasionally having a team of co-workers that felt like a community where she described them as, "dependable…I can count on you, you have my back. We're gonna get through it." Rosa adds,

> There's just something reassuring about knowing there's someone you have a connection with that is different…there's something a Black woman is going to understand that nobody else will. With Black women, there's just something that you understand…maybe it's the role that we play in the family structure. So,

> we've got our kids, we're breadwinners. We're trying to do this. We're trying to navigate this field. And it's a double glass ceiling, because it's not just about the race ceiling, the gender ceiling as well. And so, there's something about that connection that is just really special.

Further, she discussed having a community with those you can count on culturally and connect on a different level where, "there's something there because there's a common bond…like I'm presenting and I could just look at her and there's reassurance…like, you're doing good." She also spoke about her deepest professional connections being where she's been able to have the kind of, "cultural, racial, similar experience, because it's like [they] understand what I'm going through." Rosa spoke of the only other Black teacher on campus as being her "community" in that workspace. While she joked about microaggressions like the two being called each other's names, Rosa leaned heavily on the "common understanding" the two had. A third Black teacher joined the school, and the community" and they supported one another as that teacher received pushback from administration for what Rosa believes to be her, "being that kind of Black" who is going to highlight wrongs. She expressed a desire for a "Network that could help us with thriving." Coretta stated, "I have great respect for my colleagues, even the people who I don't dig personally, I feel like they're good teachers." She added, "I feel like I'm surrounded by more people who think like me, who have my kind of mindset."

Mary discussed feeling happiest when she was involved in a school community where she was, "able to connect with families." While she stated most students were Latinx, she could relate from an immigrant's perspective and leaned into that commonality. Mary described having dinner at her students' homes and being humbled by the community's kindness to her. Feeling culturally connected and, "understand[ing] your journey, whether you've experienced it or not," is essential and one reason she stays.

Harriet and Marian expressed similar ideas as they credited other Black women for their

longevity. Harriet stated, “I feel like it’s the only reason I’ve been able to do what I've done for so long is by chance I’ve had other Black women in my spaces who understood me and identified with me as a Black woman and an educator.” Harriet spoke about the importance of allies. She named them, “a little corner of liberal outcasts,” that included people from other countries, members of the LGBTQIA community and, “a legit hippie…wore sandals and had hair down his back.” Though each member of the group “had their different spheres of liberalism,” they, “took care of each other.” Marian credits her longevity with safe spaces where she can converse with other Black educators. In fact, she shared our interview as a moment where, “I feel like I’m emptying my cup and it feels so good…sometimes we just don’t get a chance to do that. And I feel like when we do it, it’s gotta’ be a secret…why can’t we all come together...If we do, everybody’s looking like what are they talking about, you know, and it’s just like, we have to intentionally, you know, kinda’ like give each other, like the wink on the side.”

Coretta and Maya spoke of the importance of community for Black female educators to thrive. This type of network serves an essential role for Black women in both professional and historic settings. She referred to earlier generations of women and how they used to cook communally. She shared, “the women used to sit on the porch and shuck peas, snap peas, and talk. Or maybe they would quilt and talk. And there was always communication, flowing jokes, catching up with each other’s lives. There was also mentoring going on…and there was sisterhood.” She also stated she finds, “a lot of strength in sisterhood.” Maya attributed her longevity to experiences where she was able to, “walk into a place where it was okay to be me. So, I didn’t have to put on airs because the majority of everyone was like me or they were allies to the point where we all felt super comfortable with one another.” She stated further that she, “was allowed to be me and do ‘me’ the way ‘me’ needed to be done because the children who sat

in front of me and their parents all looked like me."

Michelle attributed her best years in the classroom to a cohesive staff that was diverse in thought and ideas. She spoke of teachers on a particular staff that were Japanese, Mexican, and Hawaiian who all brought their experiences and voice in service of students and that they "were all coming from different spaces and we were bringing that," into their teaching practices. Similarly, Mary credited a successful beginning to her teaching career due to the faculty at her school. She stated, "people were willing to help the newbies," and that she was given, "lots of hand me downs from their room[s]" and that they, "just put me under their wings." Mary added that her sense of belonging has kept her in the profession. She stated, "I think finding my niche…I [saw] how I could help students, how I could help families. I worked in a, well still work in a lower socioeconomic area and it was just…heartwarming to see…families and the needs and what I could provide and how grateful…they were for my help." This type of collective support was observed in each participant and connects back to their childhood experiences. Community served as an essential component of a lengthy career.

Participants discussed mentorship as a form of support and encouragement that helped them sustain long careers in education. Mentorship reflects the comfort of the community many of the participants spoke of during their interviews. They spoke of the need for individuals like them to share wisdom and offer support on ways in which the system can be best navigated for career advancement.

Rosa added that Black female educators need a "network of other Black women doing this work," and that she's had, "not a big network, but you know, a couple girlfriends here and there who are in education." Participants spoke of being the one Black person on teams or campuses and that having a mentor that has been in the same spaces you have is essential to

successfully navigating what can be hostile waters. Sometimes it is not a network but a particular individual that was credited with career extending mentorship. Harriet spoke of a particular former administrator who "pushed" her into, "doing professional development and training …because she was always so impressed with what she saw in my room." Harriet credited this administrator with sending her to the training she needed and, "allowed me the space to become the teacher I was becoming." Harriet spoke of her first Black principal who she described as "passionate," "kind," and "sweet." This administrator interviewed each staff member and listened when Harriet told her, "We need full systemic change." This administrator served as a system of support when Harriet faced resistance to initiatives she pitched from her white peers.

Marian, Mary, and Coretta spoke highly of several mentors. Marian spoke of teachers who saw her love of learning, one of whom she's still in touch with. She also described the care of a Black principal who has been a long time mentor. Marian described her as "empowering" her to share strengths. These mentors countered the negative narrative Marian had been given most of her life. Similarly, Mary recalled one of her first interviews where she stated, "the principal reminded me of my dad. He was a tall Black man and he looked at me and he's like, 'if you want the job, the job is yours'." Mary described mentors as those who believe in your abilities and encourage you to do things you might not believe you are capable of. Coretta spoke of having a series of strong administrators with whom she had mutual respect. She recalled one of them asking, "'why can't our kids have that? If they can have it, we can too.' And she would bring those kinds of experiences, you know, to the campus." She added that this principal, "got rid of teachers…that had low expectations," or "white savior syndrome."

Although Michelle spoke about the importance of community, she did not have the support of a strong mentor. She had a handful of Black teachers she knew and worked with, but

not someone to tap her on the shoulder and support her in pursuing opportunities. However, she did discuss the need for Black teachers to see Black school leaders. She stated, “representation matters. We can’t see the greatness of Black educators, of educators of color, administrators of color, unless we actually have them.”

Thus, a lack of mentors, and therefore community, can be an invisible barrier to success. Due to racialized encounters and cultural differences, Black mentors prove invaluable in the career advancement of Black female educators. Whether mentor or novice, along with this common career pathway, Black female educators share a common sense of purpose as will be discussed below. Despite the often negative reactions participants received when voicing what is often an overlooked or unpopular opinion, they did so due to a sense of professional purpose. Being a Black female educator seems to also include assuming the role of advocate and desire to right wrongs few have the interest or agency to speak on. Participants fought for students in ways that may not have happened had they not done so in their various roles. Participants felt it was part of their personally added professional duties and worth the risks they took to speak up. Though participants had many examples of incidents where decisions were made for the kids, where community, mentorship and sense of purpose pervaded, none felt they were in a state of professionally thriving despite their longevity in the field. In the next section, participants discuss factors they believe necessary to thrive professionally.

How Do Black Female Educators Define Professional Thriving in K-12 Environments, and What Do They Attribute to Their Own Sense of Thriving Throughout Their Careers?

Participants defined professional thriving in a variety of ways including professional respect and a community of support as will be discussed below. According to Darling-Hammond (2021), *simply being* is the goal of thriving and these participants had yet to experience

consistent thriving in their K-12 work environments. The concept of *simply being* allows individuals to exist in an authentic manner without fear, judgment, or any other barriers to success. The five components of thriving include community, selfhood, abundance, pleasure, and relief. In the context of Black female teachers thriving, this includes a sense of knowing, loving, and asserting self, being amongst a chosen family where social justice is centered, there is a sense of belonging, and there is opportunity for hopes and dreams to be fulfilled. Ample resources that allow all of these to occur were an essential part of this as well. Finally, laughter, joy, passion, and purpose were coupled with safety and well-being. Findings showed that some of these tenets were evident with the participants, though infrequent and inconsistent. Other tenets were absent though participants referred to them as necessary to thrive. Having a sense of professional respect surfaced in terms of the ways participants felt they were or would like to use their voice to better support themselves or students. And as surfaced many times in the interviews, a supportive network also proved the perception of the ability to thrive.

Professional Respect

Participants spoke about their sense of thriving being dependent upon the ability to use their voice and not only be acknowledged, but action taken as a result. They wanted the agency to speak and make changes on behalf of themselves and their students. Participants expressed a desire for spaces where they can bring their whole selves, including their cultures into their classrooms and workspaces. Michelle defined thriving as a place and time where Black women were, “assumed to be great at what we’re doing and the bar isn’t so low that when you start asking me questions, you go right for color and at the same time say you’re color blind.” She added, “give me a collaborative space and assume that I’m great.” She shared having moments where she felt she thrived but that she never felt acknowledged for what she was capable of

accomplishing. She believed her race was put above her talent. Michelle's sentiments connect to the need for community and abundance.

Coretta described thriving as spaces when teachers were, "allowed the room and the space to carve out their own way that they would like to lead." Coretta added, "we're thriving when we are allowed to expand our capacity and carve out…areas that…turn us on as educators." She later described this as, "choice to make my own path." Coretta stated, "when you find a school with leadership that first of all, can recognize talent and use human resources and the human capital that is around it, I think that teachers respond." She referenced the theater and drama programs she revived at her school site and the fulfillment she felt knowing she was able to provide something new for her students. Coretta spoke to the need for abundance of opportunity for herself and her students.

Marian's concept of thriving was defined as the freedom for, "planning, preparing, reflection and just enjoying the little moments." She added that in her role as administrator, this is difficult because, "I have to be methodical about everything that I do. I always have to think twice because I have to see…how would this be perceived by someone else that doesn't look like me?" Marian referenced stereotypes about Black women and having to navigate how her message might be received in a given situation and by varying parties prior to speaking so she could garner the best possible outcome.

Mary discussed the need for professional support to thrive. She discussed the varying needs of her students and her inability to meet those needs solitarily. She stated, "I look at my students…I say, are my students excelling? You know, are they getting what I'm teaching them? You know, am I getting the support that I need in order to teach them?" She added that "baggage" from home and other environmental factors are "detrimental to them" and students

are not getting the support they need. Therefore, “teachers are getting so overwhelmed…and so burned out.” She went on to say, “I think you can’t thrive when you’re overwhelmed, maybe want to, and I want to, but I feel like I can only do it for so long.” Mary’s description of the need for support connected to an awareness of selfhood while needing relief from being overextended. Providing teachers with the resources needed to support the various needs of their students includes schools and districts treating educators like professionals.

Participants shared that schools and districts also provided opportunities to grow professionally. They discussed having resources in the form of mentors who could share opportunities and coach toward them. They also mentioned the need for increased compensation towards jobs or furthering education. Feelings of safety and community in having other Black women also rose as an essential component of thriving.

Rosa would like to see more compensation for Black women educators to thrive. She hypothesized that more Black women would stay in the classroom if they could afford to do so. Rosa added, “I would say in my circle of friends, as Black women, we are really the breadwinners…which means there’s more pressure to make sure that there’s financial security.” Black female educators to thrive, resources in the form of agency, training, and compensation are essential according to participants. Additionally, resources in the form of human capital are essential as well.

Community of Support

In all participant interviews, the importance of community and/or negative effects of what happens in the absence of community was discussed. In this light, participants attributed thriving to feelings of safety that come from safe spaces made up of supportive communities. This appeared in the form of peers and supervisors who saw the talent in the participants and saw

beyond what their Blackness could contribute to the work environment. To thrive, these women need to be recognized as valuable parts of the school learning community.

Removing the effects of isolation by increasing the number of Black educators was reported as a tool to increase the opportunity to thrive. Harriet described the need for Black female educators to thrive there, “would have to be more of us…Black people would have to work with and around other Black people." She believed this might minimize negative stereotypes that are particularly prevalent when the number of Black educators is few. She added that being able to live outside of that stereotype with people who both understood Blackness, yet saw beyond the boundaries of race, “would create a level of freedom that I don’t believe Black educators currently have.” These ideas connect with selfhood and community due to her request for accepted authenticity.

Participants also expressed the need for Black female educators to be seen for more than being a racial representative. Michelle stated, “representation matters,” and that without it, “we can’t see the greatness of Black educators, educators of color, administrators of color, unless we actually have them…so there has to be intention around that piece.” She also spoke of the “magical moment when you find another Black woman that is at the same place with you…that has made the decision to authentically find herself…there’s no letting go.” Michelle’s statements connect to the need for community to provide relief.

Harriet reiterated that having her Black principal, “transformed everything for me.” She connected that to thriving when she said, “thriving looks like putting down the oppressive systems that we have in place and re-imagining it all together.” She added that education should feel like, “collective betterment, collective growth.” She used the analogy of thriving as a living plant. She stated, “your garden does not just need sunlight and water. Your garden needs to be

fed to grow." This "feeding" is a connection to other Black women. She stressed that to thrive, "we need our community." She added that, "very specifically needing the nurturing, growing creative space of Black women educators for Black women educators as they're coming up would be honestly, the only real way to achieve," thriving. Like the other participants, Harriet described the importance of community, relief and pleasure that is accompanied by the presence of other Black educators.

> We need connection. We need communication to one another across spheres, not just within our campuses, but across the nation, across the globe. We have to be able to connect with each other and connect with each other's spirits and connect with each other's understanding and connect with our roots. I think we need to connect to our African Americanness and do all of that together while connecting to our scholars and our educators and our womanhood and our gender identity and all of those things…and it needs to be regular.

Though Michelle stated she has, "never been in a space that assumed her greatness," the closest she came was one of her happiest times in education when she first began because she had reduced class size, freedom, and autonomy. She mentioned being able to observe other teachers and try new things within her classroom. She added that she, "has thrived from sheer will," and knowing that she is making a difference, though without, "confirmation from the outside."

Michelle spoke about, "solidarity in action, meaning colleagues that I am working with closely…articulating that they are toiling with and grappling with these complex notions," of diversity and equity and are "risking" something of their own and showing up "publicly" to do the work. Michelle added that long term thriving would allow for time to, "reflect…breathe, meditate and read and educate herself." Michelle spoke of the absence of community and that it is an essential component of thriving. Michelle simply stated, "Black teachers need more Black teachers." She explained that this is so they do not have to be in spaces where they are alone or

think about race. She added, “every day when I walk into a school and everybody’s white, I know I’m Black. I’m reminded of that everyday…And so why can’t I be thinking about something else? Why can’t I have that sort of connectivity and community that you all have? It matters. There is a connection and a belonging and a culture that is missing when you don't see anyone that looks like you.” Her ideas connect to the need for relief and the safety and well-being that come from conditions where there are people who see beyond what racial identity can contribute as an educational resource.

Harriet added to Michelle’s sentiment that, “we all need cohorts that are just specifically for us…I found my community of Black teachers on Twitter, Black female teachers on Twitter, and it completely changed everything for me…the community understandings, the sense of love, all of that.” Harriet frequently spoke of the importance of having supportive others. We need each other.” Harriet referred to her Black principal and stated, “We need to see each other in power and leadership. We need to be answerable to each other. Black women require Black women, and I don’t know another way of saying it.” Harriet’s comments were directly connected to the need for community to find relief and pleasure.

Findings discussed earlier in this chapter discussed the impact of mentors in terms of remaining in education. Participants also named mentors as an essential part of thriving. When asked what Black female educators need to remain in education, Rosa stated mentorship is essential. She shared, “you need mentorship and guidance as to how to navigate this work,” including, “the relationships you’re gonna have with your students,” and, “how families will react to you when they see that you are their child’s teacher.” Rosa went further to add that moving into leadership means, “Black women need mentorship and community sisterhood.” Coretta stated there needs to be more mentoring programs for Black female educators. She

elaborated by stating, “I know that there are very few Black administrators, and they would be nice to have a mentoring program, to help teachers who want to be administrators…there needs to be a clear pathway for Black female teachers to become administrators.” In terms of mentorship, Coretta stated, “Mentorship is different from training and education,” and that a mentor shares, “the ins and outs, tricks of the trade, tools of the trade, strategies, political stuff,” in addition to skills and theory. Her sentiments reflect the need for community, selfhood, and abundance.

Maya stated, “access to successful Black mentors," is needed for Black female educators to thrive. She expanded by sharing, “I think solid, successful mentors who have traveled the same path that the new teachers are about to embark upon because hearing the tricks of the trade from someone who looks like you is different than, you know, hearing them from some random person who you just don’t even know.” She added that, “thriving would be not staying at status quo and constantly growing in some way…whether it’s in your pedagogy or your mindset, there’s some growth happening or even growing your circle of influence.” Proof of thriving would be reflected in, “the children in their class thriving,” in terms of success rate of children in class, relationships between teachers and students and how they interact daily. She added that teachers need not suffer in silence, but be, “able to own up to the fact that you need support and ask for that support.” Maya also stated thriving would require, “making sure that as administrators, we are being attentive in building the relationships and offering support, as often as possible,” to brand new teachers who just, “wanna please their boss.” In order to do so, Maya advocated for the creation of, “an environment where everybody makes mistakes, and everybody’s offered support.” Maya’s ideas encompass the elements of community, selfhood, abundance, and relief.

Marian did not believe she was thriving professionally but that she has had "little successes" that have come from student and colleague feedback. However, this support has helped her stay in the field. She described the need for, "feeling like the support you have is genuine." She spoke of being one of four Black people in the space she works and wonders if she's "the token" when she is, "always getting the calls from the angry Black parents." She added that she wants to be appreciated where she can, "genuinely feel [appreciation] in my heart." Marian's statements referenced the need for community support and relief in the form of working in safe spaces.

Each of the participants was asked to assess themselves in terms of professional thriving and given the opportunity to offer their thoughts on what it would take to thrive in professional academic settings. Participants did not feel they were thriving overall, but many had moments or periods where they felt they were. As was noted in the discussion of why they remain in education despite the racial and gendered experiences, remaining was more a matter of being there out of necessity rather than because they were thriving. To thrive, participants spoke of the need for their voices to be heard, the ability to create and advocate for themselves and others while being accepted for their authentic selves, not just be sought after in terms of racial issues. Participants also discussed the need for safe spaces which included the presence of other Black women and access to Black female mentors. Participants asked for more opportunities for advancement. Their comments connected to all five of the Bridge to Thriving Framework tenets that include, community, selfhood, abundance, pleasure, and relief.

Discussion

The lenses of Black Feminism and the Bridge to Thriving Framework were used to examine Black female educator retention in the field. Veteran Black female educators were

asked about their racialized and gendered experiences both pre-professional and during their careers. Participants shared a plethora of experiences that in turn, shaped their professional experiences and motivations to remain in the field of education. Participants also shared their experiences with thriving as well as views on what it would take for them to feel as if they were thriving in the field.

The intersectionality of race and gender played a significant role in the participants' experiences as youth, in the community, in schools and in their careers. Participants described an abundance of positive experiences with support from their communities or the negative aspects from a lack of it. For some this was a sense of strength from family, the church, and school, and for others, their neighborhood. Models of Black femininity, strength, and the importance of leaning on a support group arose from these early experiences. Some participants described the repercussions of not having a community of support, particularly in classrooms from elementary school through college, as they discussed the negative treatment they received from teachers and students who did not look like them.

The multitude of experiences continued into the participants' adult lives as they entered teaching and other aspects of the educational field as administrators. Participants reflected on positive communities made up of educators and administrators that looked like them and the importance of purposeful support from allies that did not. They also shared daunting accounts of racialized experiences with teaching team members, parents, and administrators.

Findings showed that participants did not consider themselves to be thriving but rather surviving and often sustaining just enough to remain in their careers. Many did mention that they had moments of thriving, often self-created. To thrive, participants discussed the need for other Black women who often serve as spaces of respite in often hostile work environments. Having

ample Black female peers in their professional arenas was a way to combat the isolation and complications that often come with that. They also discussed the importance of having Black females as mentors, specifically stating the benefits of having someone who had already navigated racialized and gendered territory and could warn and coach them through the pitfalls ahead. Black female educators thriving also included opportunities to advance and receive support on the pathway to those opportunities. Finally, thriving would include spaces where Black female educators felt they had a voice in decision making, agency to make change and were able to move through their professional spaces with authenticity that was welcomed and supported.

Conclusion

The many racialized and gendered experiences Black female veteran educators described in this study are largely reflected in the literature (Ginwright, 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2021; Love, 2019; Nash, 2019). And despite these experiences, these educators remain in the profession due to the following community-centered assertions: a) They remain in service of and for students, b) They remain with a strong sense of community made up of sisters, mentors and allies, and c) They remain when they have a strong sense of agency and voice in their own career trajectory and professional choice. Chapter 5 will include further discussion of these assertions as they relate to BFT and BTF as well as their implications for further study and practice.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter begins with a summary of the study's purpose, overarching research question and sub questions, methodology and incorporation of the theoretical frameworks. I also discuss the assertions from Chapter Four within the context of the literature. Implications for educational leaders and implications for social justice will follow. This chapter concludes with a discussion of future considerations and a conclusion.

Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of Black female veteran teachers in terms of their racialized and gendered experiences, investigate attributing factors to their professional longevity and determine if and how Black, female veteran teachers were thriving in the profession. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two discussed the historic importance of the Black teacher and how desegregation of schools began a steep decline in their numbers. The percentage of Black teachers has never again as closely matched the percentage of Black students. The literature also asserted Black teachers are beneficial to all children increasing overall student success and decreasing punitive disciplinary practices. However, Black female teachers experience a variety of obstacles based in racism and sexism and their already small numbers are leaving the profession at higher rates than their peers (Ginwright, 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2021; Love, 2019; Nash, 2019).

This study sought to capture the experiences of Black female veteran teachers that have remained in the educational field despite factors described in the literature and throughout this study. The aim was to capture conditions and practices that promote Black female educator career longevity. The theoretical lenses of Black Feminism and the Bridge to Thriving Framework were used to investigate and contribute to the limited body of research about asset-

based factors that contribute to Black female veteran teacher retention. With this context in mind, the following research question and sub questions were addressed:

How has being Black and female shaped teachers' experiences and longevity in the profession?

A. What experiences do Black female teachers describe as being based on historical or systemic racial and gender dynamics?

B. What factors do Black female teachers attribute to their remaining in the profession in spite of experiences they perceive to be due to their race and or gender?

C. How do Black female teachers define professional thriving in K-12 environments and what do they attribute to their own sense of thriving throughout their careers?

This phenomenological study was conducted using two sets of semi-structured, open-ended interviews of seven, self-identifying Black female educators with more than 10 years of experience. Participants were all employed in public, K-12 school districts in the state of California. They were selected via purposeful professional recommendation to yield participants with in-depth knowledge of public school employment. Participants had from 10-25 years of experience as classroom teachers and school and district level administrators. At the time of the interviews, three of the participants were classroom teachers, one was a school principal, and the other three were directors at the school district level.

Black Feminism (Nash, 2019) and the Bridge to Thriving Framework (Darling-Hammond, 2021) were used in the creation of interview questions and analysis in this qualitative study. Interviews were transcribed, checked for accuracy, and analyzed. Manual open coding

was used to generate a preliminary list of themes that represented the experiences of participants. Themes were combined and transcripts were reviewed again and re-coded. Sub themes were sorted according to frameworks connected with each of the research questions. Findings that emerged were reviewed in Chapter Four and are highlighted below.

The first research sub question addressed participant experiences based on their racial identities. From childhood through their professional environments, all participants discussed the role their Blackness played in their interactions with others. They discussed a sense of safety and belonging within their family units and communities. Participants have varying racialized experiences in their schooling, in part due to the school's dynamics. Likewise, participants discussed racialized incidents in their work environments. Collectively the need for a community of both those who looked like participants and allies who willfully supported participants was expressed.

Participants attributed a variety of experiences with their gender identities as well. Although many spoke of their original views of feminism as a white woman's phenomena, participants could identify with Black Feminism's tenets of love of self, sisterhood and community in a way that often presents itself as unique to Black women who have often had to choose between their Blackness and their womaness. Participants spoke of growing up with and being raised to be strong Black women who handled situations with grace and resistance relying on the company of other women. They spoke reverence about the Black female educators that made impacts on them, and for some, affirmed their own decision to become an educator.

The second research subquestion focused on why Black female educators remain in the field despite their often negative racialized and gendered experiences. Participant responses centered around the community in terms of being a support system for kids, their relationships

with kids and the need to advocate on their behalf. Many participants relayed the idea that they must speak for those that don't often have a voice or to represent views that would not otherwise be heard. Participants relayed the urgency of their roles for their own kids, the students in their direct service, and all kids. This intense sense of purpose was a prevalent theme that served as a guiding light, particularly in times when participants were experiencing professional hardships connected to issues they attributed to race and gender.

The influence of community also surfaced as an important source of support to which participants credited their longevity. Almost all the participants spoke of the sisterhood they felt when working with other Black female educators. They gave examples of good and bad times where leaning on their educator sisters kept them motivated to stay in the profession. The unspoken communication, recognition and relief from isolation that came from working with other Black female educators seemed to provide respite from many of the negative racialized experiences they shared.

The importance of community also surfaced in terms of the support provided by mentors. While many participants spoke of a fellow Black female mentor specifically, some spoke of Black men and other women of color as sources of support and guidance. Participants credited these mentors for assisting with navigation through white spaces, advocacy and providing opportunities for Black female educators.

A third aspect of community that arose as a factor to Black female educator longevity was the presence of allies. Participants shared stories of colleagues standing shoulder to shoulder with them against other teachers and administrators. While these allies were not of the same racial background, and some men, they supported participants by working and speaking with them when inequity, injustice and unfairness arose on campuses.

A final factor participants attributed to their longevity was the professional agency they have felt at times throughout their careers. For some participants, this was pursuing campus changes that interested them. For others, this was speaking on behalf of often silenced students and being able to make changes accordingly. For many, the support of community ushered this sense of agency forth.

The third and final research subquestion focused on Black female educators thriving. Participants shared how community shaped their world view and formed a system of support from childhood into the professional realm. The Bridge to Thriving Framework was used to analyze participant experiences and hopes in terms of creating an environment where more Black female educators might remain in the profession.

In order to thrive, participants named the need for professional respect, access to a community of support and workspaces filled with laughter, joy, abundance and rest. However, many participants shared incidents where their ideas were discredited or discounted. They also described feelings of concern regarding the perceptions of others in their workspaces. The need for a community of support from administrators, teachers and the entire school community was noted as a necessity to professionally thrive though participants shared this occurred sparingly. Additionally, the need for workdays filled with laughter and joy and where rest and respite are ingrained into workplace culture also rose as a necessary component of thriving.

While participants named these components as necessary conditions for thriving, they also stated they occurred infrequently and inconsistently. Participants shared stories where respect, support and joy were present in particular incidents, but not in a sustainable manner. Each participant described a situation in which they thrived; however, they did not describe themselves as thriving overall.

Discussion of Findings

The data collected and analyzed from interviews with Black female veteran educators generated seldom noted perceptions about their professional perspectives and experiences. Existing research has focused on barriers to becoming educators and the reasons why Black female educators leave the profession (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; James-Gallaway et al., 2021; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2020). Study participants shared many examples of their experiences with these barriers, such as isolation, lack of mentorship and oppositional peers. Unlike the focus of much of the literature, this study sought to better understand the motivation behind why this group of educators remained in K-12 education despite the often negative factors that contribute to pushing so many educators out. The individual and collective stories that arose from these interviews and the themes that emerged formed the assertions presented in this chapter. Chapter Four documented the connection of these themes to research questions. This chapter will move those concepts further by connecting them to the study's frameworks to present findings. The following assertions represent this grouping of findings:

1) Black educators are not thriving and need pleasure and abundance in their places of employment.

2) Black educators need Black educators.

3) Black educators need more resources.

4) The lived experiences of Black female veteran educators can inform lasting and meaningful systemic improvements for K-12 educators.

The Frameworks of Black Feminism (BF) and the Bridge to Thriving Framework (BTF) are the lenses used to frame this analysis and conversation. BF seeks to help interpret the

intersectionality of Blackness and gender, and BTF is a tool to define what thriving might entail in the educational setting.

Implications for Research and Practice: Education and The Bridge to Thriving

The Bridge to Thriving Framework allows insight into conditions and influences that create environments where Black female K-12 educators can not only survive and maintain but thrive. Seidman's (2019) focus on the multi-tiered interview, where the participants' lived experiences are examined prior to both participant and researcher reflection of the information that surfaces, illuminated circumstances of thriving. This interview practice was an act of liberation in that the teacher's experience from the teacher's perspective was centered, examined, valued, and used to address the needs of future teachers (Dillard, 2022). If we are to be socially conscious educational practitioners, the voice of the *participant* must be centered in each part of the educational arena. Freire (1970) argued this critical consciousness includes analyzing the problem with a sense of agency that results in critical action. How can this truly occur without listening to all parties involved?

Through the Bridge to Thriving Framework, this study has allowed for healing in that it interrogates power, historicizes schools and policy, listens critically, engages in discomfort, and takes action (Dillard, 2022; Ginwright, 2018). Criteria contributing to thriving included the campus community, freedom to display selfhood, feeling supported, having resources, feeling a sense of pleasure and the ability to simply *be* in a work environment (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Following is a discussion of findings and resulting implications for educators and future research.

Black Educators are Not Thriving

Although the participants all had educational careers of ten years or more, as the data revealed in Chapter Four, participants do not consider themselves to be thriving. Participants defined thriving as an environment where they felt community and a sense of belonging with people who shared core parts of their identity and consciousness. Participants described thriving as spaces where they felt safe to speak freely, be heard and have the resources they needed to accomplish their professional responsibilities. They also discussed the value of pleasure defined as ample moments of joy and laughter while pursuing purpose and passion. This aligns with Love's (2019) concept of *Abolitionist Teaching* where mattering and citizenship are closely aligned with thriving, freedom, and joy. However, at most, participants said they did not feel they were thriving, and a few said they never had. Instead, they found thriving in moments or with the support and camaraderie of certain individuals.

Participants' reflections noted the need for pleasure and abundance in particular. When they are constantly fighting stereotypes regarding their race and gender, they are unable to have a wealth of laughter and joy making it harder to work towards their purpose with passion. This connects with the Black female teacher's intimate role of fighting while living within systems of institutional white supremacy (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; James-Gallaway et al., 2021; McKinney de Royston et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2020). While participants had a strong sense of self and were grounded in purpose, the absence of support in terms of community and agency interfered with their ability to thrive (Cross, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2021).

Tenets of Black Feminism surfaced throughout the participant interviews in both personal and professional experiences. Each of the participants was clear in their Blackness and did not hesitate to express love of self. Love of sisterhood was also a common theme in terms of the ways isolation is limited when there are other Black women in a workspace. Participants shared

about affirming exchanges with fellow Black women as well as the importance of having them as mentors. Love for community also rose as a strong theme with participants. Support for Black children and the Black community was evident and served the purpose of offsetting Eurocentric ways of schooling that have proven ineffective for some children (Beard, 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Hollinside, 2017; King, 1993; Matthews, 2019). Working for the greater good was a commonality participants shared. However, participants shared the negative effects of not having this support at various times in their careers.

Though participants did not feel they were actively thriving, they credited their longevity in education as a need to support the students they serve. Participants shared examples of how they were voices to protect and serve underrepresented students. Some expressed an understanding of students and their needs in a way non-Black educators did not, due to their own experiences. Other participants spoke about calling out injustices that disproportionately affected students of color and if they did not remain in the educational system, particularly in places where decisions were made, harm would be done to the children. This aligns with motivating factors of seeing children learn and grow through strong, positive relationships (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; King, 1993).

Black female educators in this study shared the need for opportunities and support systems for them to feel like they were thriving. Mentoring, job opportunities and increased compensation would provide the relief needed to continue to pursue pleasure in the form of passion and purpose. This type of connection to the school community was also revealed in the literature (Klaeijsen et al., 2018; Kokka, 2016).

Implications

While it is true Black female educators are leaving the educational arena at higher rates than their peers, there are Black female veteran educators working hard to make education an equitable endeavor for all students. However, the participants of this study gave accounts that show regardless of their years in education, they are not thriving. One participant stated she is "simply surviving, not thriving" and another said she was "hanging on until retirement."

It is imperative the schools and districts find ways that allow Black female educators to thrive. It is vital that researchers and school officials create spaces where community is nurtured and supported. This needs to begin with pathways to becoming an educator. Only two of the seven participants completed a traditional educator training program while the other five all went through alternative certification pathways. Those that attended traditional programs identified racial incidents within their programs. The participants who went through alternative pathways did so due to financial constraints or late decisions to become educators. Improvement in teacher education program recruiting is needed as is attention to the unique needs of Black educators once they are in programs. Once programs are completed, increasing recruitment of Black educators to help eliminate the sense of isolation many participants named is needed. Connecting educators with shared critical consciousness, across campuses, if need be, could help build a sense of community for the Black educators often sprinkled throughout educational spaces.

To thrive, Black educators need agency as well. Many participants spoke of the importance of having their voice and ideas acknowledged, respected, and acted upon. This would allow an increase in pleasure in the form of passion and purpose. Schools and districts need more Black females in formal and informal leadership roles and need to actively solicit and act upon ideas they have crafted. Training, education, and promotional opportunities will offer pathways for Black female educators to professionally thrive. For abundance to exist, these educators need

the resources for their hopes and dreams to come to fruition. School sites and districts have the authority to make these adaptations to their often limited opportunities.

Black Educators Need Black Educators

Participants shared many experiences that could be accredited to their longevity in K-12 education. All participants expressed the need for Black educators to have other Black educators in a variety of forms. They spoke of the importance of having a sisterhood in the workplace where the intersectionality of being Black and female brings unique experiences. Participants reported frustration with having to explain their thinking or physical appearance because they are different from the majority. They spoke of the importance of having someone that understood them in a way that only people from their own culture could and the trust that comes with that in terms of being supportive, truthful and challenging one to be their best selves. The absence of this type of support aligns with the prevalence of microaggressions and the Racial Battle Fatigue that accompanies it (Frank et al., 2021; Kohli et al., 2017). These ideas represent the need for community, relief, and pleasure from BTF.

Participants also spoke of the importance of having Black female mentors. Again, due to the intersectionality of being Black and female, there are unique issues to be navigated when trying to move through a predominantly white (male) space. Participants describe the desire for mentors to share opportunities, coach them and assist with problem solving. Trust and feeling of safety due to similar kinship exist with this type of mentorship. Literature referred to the importance of mentorship and supportive leadership that were often lacking for Black educators (Matthews, 2019; Reitman et al., 2019; Stanley, 2020; Urick, 2016). This study went further to investigate what specifically was beneficial to these participants.

Implications

While there are veteran Black educators in K-12 schools, they are often the only one or one of a few at a particular site or sometimes in the whole district. As has previously been mentioned, isolation and lack of safety make it difficult for these educators to thrive in their professional environments and undue harm has been caused to many. Schools and districts need to make recruitment efforts to bring more Black females into the workplace. Schools and districts also need to make efforts to retain these individuals. Instead of dispersing Black female educators to ensure there is visual diversity, school districts must consider cultivating safe spaces where these women can meet, form bonds, and build support networks. This might take place at the district level in the form of professional growth or support groups. Districts can also allocate time and resources for Black female educators to attend convenings and trainings outside the district. One of the participants mentioned meeting people on "Black Teacher Twitter" and at conferences at state and national levels. This study found that Black female educators are hungry for fellowship with one another and districts must make a commitment to foster these relationships should they want their Black educators to remain. Cultural connections and mentorship are essential to thriving and longevity.

Black Educators Need More Resources

To have thriving, long careers in education, Black females need an abundance of resources. Too often, Black women are called upon to solve all the problems with nothing more than the bare classrooms they are provided at the beginning of the school year. However, participants in this study were also more likely to attempt to solve the problems for a combination of factors. The practical factor of keeping employment serves as a catalyst for problem solving. More importantly however, is the need to solve problems they feel will not be addressed if they do not. Black women assume the burden of protecting and speaking on behalf

of Black and Brown children, often sacrificing themselves the way they would for their own children.

Support can come in the form of networking opportunities both on and across campuses as well as at conferences. Campus leadership can make concerted efforts to support Black female teachers. This could look like responding to negative parents or staff on their behalf, training all staff and raising expectations of all staff to support all students. This could also be in the form of financial support via salary, paying for extra work, paying for conference registration, or buying culturally relevant resources. This connects to existing literature that supports the need for inclusive workspaces that center teacher voices and address racial justice and equitable practices (Farinde-Wu et al., 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Kalkan et al., 2020; Urick, 2016).

Implications

The participants in this study all have exemplary careers in education and have no doubt supported countless children in their educational journeys. However, it is disconcerting they do not consider themselves to be thriving. It is imperative school leaders recognize the need for Black female educators to have a range of support, even when they seem to excel without them. To combat inevitable burnout and exodus, there needs to be intentional effort that encourages connection of Black female educators to one another. For some schools and districts, this might mean encouraging affinity groups to form. For others this may mean providing funding for Black female educators to attend training or conferences where the needs of Black female educators are centered. This might also mean offering alternative programming or excusing Black female educators from equity training where they may be ostracized or harmed because the content is geared toward a white audience and was designed for the needs of white educators. This also means schools and districts must set aside time and money for Black female teachers to be

released from typical responsibilities so they can spend time with peers and mentors. Funds need to be set aside to pay for training and other educational opportunities more suited to the needs and interests of Black female educators.

The Lived Experiences of Black Female Veteran Educators Can Inform Systemic Improvements

This study reveals that Black female educators are existing, rather than thriving, despite the length of their careers in K-12 education. Their primary motivation is to be a voice and support system for students of color, in part due to the experiences they had in their own schooling careers. Participants were keenly aware they take risks and speak on behalf of their students. However, these risks come at the expense of peace, rest and are filed with isolation and sometimes discriminatory practices from their places of employment. This connects to the literature in that policy plays a crucial role in the hiring, training and retention of Black female teachers who are disproportionately affected by current policy and practice (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017; Gold, 2020; Hollinside, 2017). Opportunities to support one another in addition to opportunities for advancement would positively impact thriving and retention (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Farinde et al., 2016; Hollinside, 2017; Ingersoll et al., 2019; Stanley, 2020).

Implications

Primarily, participants in this study spoke of the foundations of their identity being linked to community and if educational systems want to maintain their Black educator workforce, they will need to provide opportunities for them to find and create community. Teacher preparation programs can begin this creation of community with the intentional recruitment of students of color, particularly Black women, for their credential programs. This will assist in increasing the number of Black educators in the workforce. While in credential programs, future educators

should have a diverse group of teacher educators that recognize the unique needs of those within their program. Safe spaces and mentorship also need to be an important part of pre-service education.

Likewise, school and district leaders must recruit for employment openings in a similar way. Diversifying the teaching and administrative staff must be a priority as well. Current strategies are not working, so as with credential programs, districts must change how and where they search for applicants in addition to making a primary aim to diversify the applicant pool. Once hired, Black female teachers and administrators need safe spaces away from white gazes. The need to be able to speak freely and support one another. The educators also need to be with staff that has been amply trained in equity issues and will serve as outspoken allies when issues should erupt. A combination of more Black women and supportive allies will provide relief that does not exist currently.

For leadership to liberate Black female educators, they will have to utilize traits of socially conscious leadership by ensuring they serve, inspire and empower through their own example (Freire, 1970). School and district leaders must create opportunities for all stakeholders to interrupt inequity and increase opportunities, beginning with their own hiring, discipline, and communication practices (Beard, 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Graham, 1987; Hollinside, 2017). Transforming power to students, teachers, support staff, parents and community members would be a way to spawn liberation of all ideas and strengths (Dillard, 2022). As the participants of this study stated, situations in which this occurred supported their longevity in the arena of public education and countless students have benefitted from their collective voice (Hollinside, 2017; Kohli, 2019; Stanley, 2020). Further, liberatory practice would include opportunities not

only for voices to be heard but to generate critical learning opportunities for all stakeholders as well (Love, 2019).

Educational leaders need to create spaces in which Black female teachers do not need to fight like warriors when they speak out against a system that is effectively harming students, families, communities, and themselves. Seeing the system by grounding oneself in where they are, while knowing others are doing the same, is the only true path to educational liberation. Investigating systemic patterns, dynamics, oppressive areas and examining what is emerging ideologically is essential to creating a liberatory space where all voices are heard and all parties can thrive. In doing such, relational components of an organization work in tandem with the technical structures. Doing so will help note what the system regularly attends to, what needs attending to and what equitable changes need to be made (Love, 2019).

If school districts specifically want to support Black female educators, they need to make a broader commitment to and execution of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. Not only will this support current educators by creating more equitable working conditions, but it will also improve the experiences of students of color who may decide teaching is a career they want to pursue. Teachers who have a better understanding of culturally relevant practices for both adults and students can make major impacts on student experiences and success. When students have more positive experiences in school, teaching looks like a more viable career rather than something they would never consider. Districts and school boards can budget for and implement recruitment and retention programs for Black female educators. Tapping into Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the highest generator of Black teachers, could provide assistance as well. States can look at teacher certification practices that limit Black females from going into teaching. Expensive testing and unpaid student teaching are two examples of traditional

pathways into education that can hinder people from going into teaching. Multiple policy and practice changes need to occur to retain Black female educators.

Black Educator Infinity Pathway

Further, retaining Black female educators needs to be addressed in all levels of education from the K12 student through college, teacher education and during the entirety of their careers. Evolving from the findings of this study, Figure 5.1 illustrates a systemic approach to increasing and maintaining Black female educators where they can have thriving careers. As mentioned in the implications above, K12 students need to be at schools with diverse staff who are trained and imbed culturally relevant pedagogy and practice (CRP&P) in all aspects of school. This community of support will lead to positive K12 school experiences where children see higher education as viable and teaching as a potential career. College experiences need a diverse staff, institutional commitment to CRP&P with supportive communities leading to positive college experiences and seeing teaching as a career. Teacher education programs must continue to infuse CRP&P in their curriculum while also incorporating teaching methods of CRP&P, so teachers are armed with resources as they begin their careers. A diverse, supportive faculty and purposeful affinity groups and mentors would also establish a strong foundation for these future teachers. As novice teachers, support systems, mentors and school and district commitment to CRP&P would be a key factor in their early success and remaining in the profession beyond the five year mark when many new teachers leave the profession. A well trained and supported teacher will create an environment for student success, beginning the thought process of K12 students seeing teaching as a potential career. Finally, the supported novice becomes the thriving veteran who becomes both the mentor and mentee and has opportunities to explore leadership should they so choose. And again, the K12 students are well held and consider teaching as a

viable career option where they want to be the teacher(s) they experienced with the next generation of students. Therefore, in every aspect of education, from preparation to classrooms and districts, it is essential to create a community of support and recognize the need for diverse people and practices.

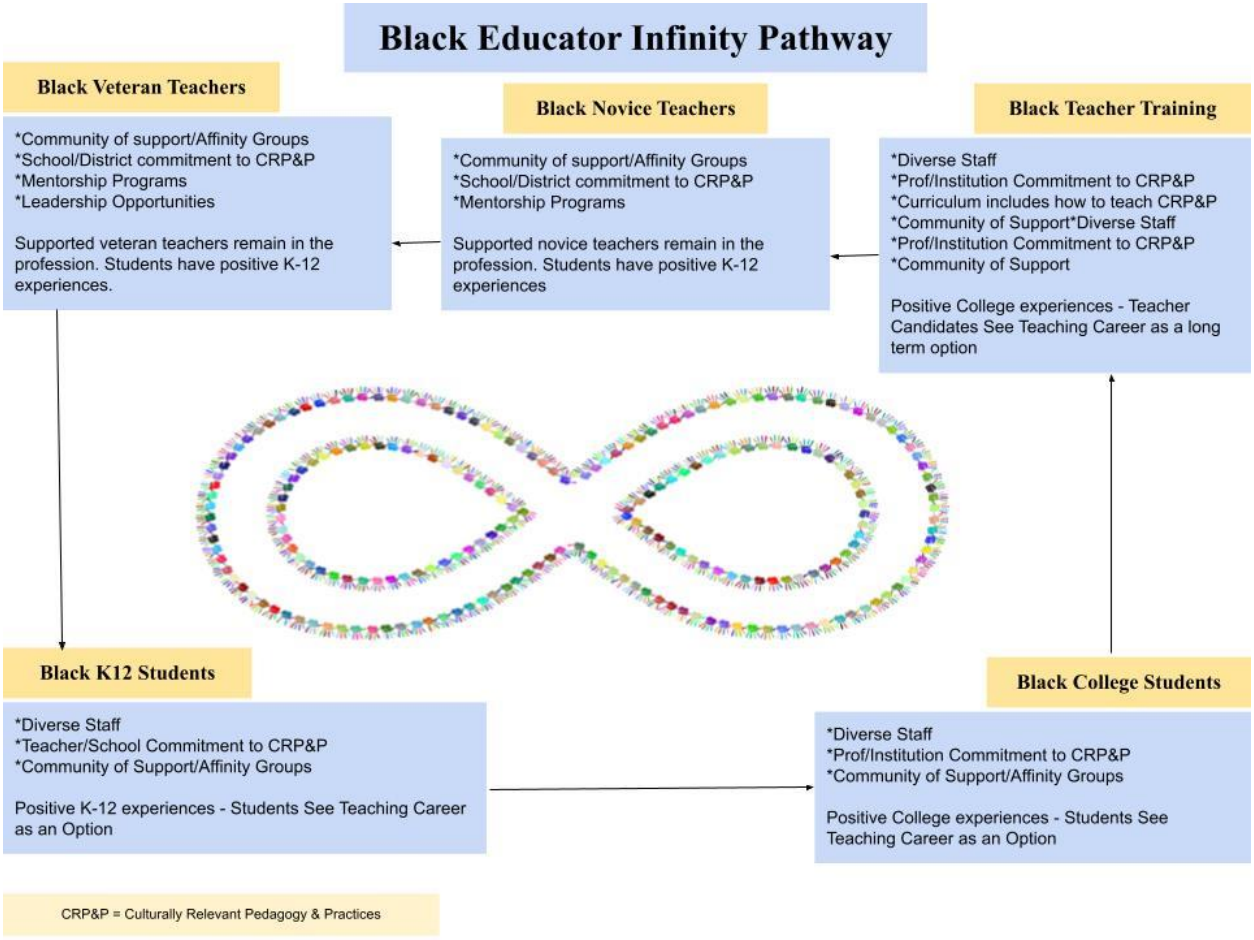

Figure 5.1: Black Educator Infinity Pathway

Areas for Future Research

The goal of this study was to illuminate the experiences of Black female veteran teachersrs to gain a meaningful understanding of their experiences, learn about conditions that contributed to their longevity in the profession, and garner artifacts and ideas that would serve to recreate conditions that contribute to Black female educators continuing to serve students while

thriving themselves. Therefore, my first recommendation is that studies like these be replicated. This study included seven participants from mostly suburban areas of California. Repeating the study with a larger volume of teachers or those in a different part of the country would yield more expansive results. Black educators in private school settings and in all Black settings can be included as well. While all participants might be Black and female, the differences in environments in which they operate would yield nuanced results. The addition of ethnographic methods including interviews of supervisors, peers and observations within work environments might also reveal findings not present when data is based solely on participant interviews. Quantitative data from large numbers of participants might also shed light on the breadth of the findings in this study.

Current literature focuses on the reasons these educators are leaving the profession at higher numbers than their non-Black peers, but this does not help address the issues causing the exodus. This study adds to the literature in that it looks at factors that contribute to longevity through the participants themselves. Study participants proved to be open, honest, insightful and filled with ideas about conditions and opportunities they felt would lead to professional thriving. More researchers should seek to lift the voices of Black female veteran educators so that educational environments can make meaningful changes leading to Black female educator retention. Participant personal history and experience, geography, human and other resources available are variables that affect experiences of Black female educators, so there is a need for more research to continue to build an understanding of the conditions for thriving.

Conclusion

The words and wisdom of our Black female K-12 educators show us what a pathway to educational liberation could look like. If we not only treat the symptoms of Black female teacher

attrition but focus on elements that allow them to thrive in the educational atmosphere, we are offering opportunities for many others to find their own liberatory pathways to longevity. When simply *being* and feeling accepted and heard in educational spaces can occur, Black female teachers will continue to share their brilliance with students and the world.

Scholarly inquiry has yet to recognize the need to increase the volume of Black female educators in both number and practice. Tools such as BT and BTF help to highlight the lived experiences of Black female educators and how they are quite different from their non-Black, female peers. BF highlights the need for Black female educators to be seen considering their unique experiences and BTF helps with understanding the benefits of creating an environment where these individuals can thrive. As a result, an inclusive narrative that focuses on welcoming authenticity, voice, and support systems can be generated.

The central aim of this qualitative study was to add to the existing body of literature on Black female teacher retention by using an asset-based lens to examine the lived experiences of veteran Black female educators. Additional goals included highlighting the voices of successful Black female educators and sharing their accomplishments despite the negative encounters they have experienced. Informing a higher standard of educational research and practice was also a goal. The four major findings of the study corroborated what was found in the literature and affirmed the need for inquiry that gives voice to those often overlooked or silenced in terms of research. Participant voices gave rise to environments and practices that can increase the number of Black female educators in the field. The more we highlight often untold stories, the more wisdom can be acquired to advance the longevity of greatly needed educators.

Appendix A: Professional Recommendation Email

California State University, San Marcos

Professional Recommendation Request

Black Female Educator Retention: Exploring Conditions Needed to Thrive

Hello,

My name is Carol Battle and I am a doctoral candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Education Leadership in the School of Education at California State University, San Marcos and the Department of Education Studies at the University of California, San Diego.

I am in the process of beginning my dissertation research and am looking for 7-10 Black, female, veteran teachers to interview regarding asset-based factors that may have contributed to their remaining in the K-12 environment in spite of racial and gender related factors.

If they choose to participate in this study, they will be interviewed by me, a fellow Black educator, twice over a three-month period. Each interview will last about an hour at a mutually agreed upon location and will be in a conversational style. During the interview, they will be asked to describe their teaching experiences from pre-service through their current position. All identifying information will be kept confidential.

Should you know anyone that may fit the criteria (Black, female, educator with a minimum of 10 years experience) and may be interested in participating, please reply to this email with their name and email address so I may contact them.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Carol Battle
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix B: Participant Solicitation Email

California State University, San Marcos

Participant Solicitation Email

Black Female Educator Retention: Exploring Conditions Needed to Thrive

Dear Educator,

My name is Carol Battle and I am a doctoral candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Education Leadership in the School of Education at California State University San Marcos and the University of California, San Diego.

Your name was shared with me by (*fill in professional referral here*) who believes you fit the criteria for the 7-10 Black, female, veteran teachers I hope to interview for my research. You are invited to participate in a research study to find asset-based factors that contribute to Black female teachers staying in the K-12 environment in spite of racial and gender related factors.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by me, a fellow Black educator, twice over a three-month period. Each interview will last about an hour at a mutually agreed upon location and will be in a conversational style. During the interview, you will be asked to describe your teaching experiences from pre-service through your current position. I am particularly interested in your reflections on being a Black woman in these environments and ways in which you were or weren't supported.

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study and identifying information will remain confidential. Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty. You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

Should you be interested in participating, please reply to this email so I may schedule a time to meet with you and send an official consent form.

I look forward to the possibility of hearing about your teaching experiences.

Sincerely,

Carol Battle
Doctoral Candidate
CSUSM/UCSD

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

California State University, San Marcos

Interview Protocol

Black Female Educator Retention: Exploring Conditions Needed to Thrive

- **Informed Consent Received**
  - **Digital**
  - **Hard Copy**

Interpretive Notes (Pre-Interview):

Interview #1

Thank you for participating in this interview. My name is Carol Battle and I am a doctoral candidate studying Educational Leadership in a joint doctoral program through CSU San Marcos and UC San Diego.

We are here today to learn about your experiences as a Black female educator in the K-12 school environment.

Our conversation will last approximately 60 minutes and if it's ok with you, I would like to audio record this interview to help ensure I can make sense of our conversation in subsequent portions of my study. After the interview, you may request a copy of the audio and/or transcripts at any time. The audio recording and subsequent transcripts will not be shared with anyone from your employment and any identifying information will be removed when discussing the interview with my advisor or dissertation committee.

You may choose to stop the interview at any time. If at any time you choose not to answer a question, please let me know and we will move to the next question.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Let's begin!

Date	
Time of Interview	

Location	
Participant Pseudonym	
Current Job Title	

Demographic Information:

Number of Years Teaching in the Classroom	
Number of Years in Education	
Undergraduate Degree (Type and earned from where)	
Credential(s) (Type and earned from where)	
Graduate Degree(s) (Type and earned from where)	
Hometown	
Current Town	

Questions:

Life History

1. Tell me about your upbringing.

2. When and where have you felt a sense of community or true belonging?

3. Where were/are spaces where you experience the greatest experiences of laughter, joy, passion and/or purpose?

4. What were your K-12 school experiences like? Can you recall any experiences you feel

were based on your racial or gender identity?

5. Did you have any Black female teachers in your K-12 experience? Did having or not having them influence your decision to become a teacher?

6. Do you feel your college experiences had any influence on the way you identify with race and/or gender?

7. How do you define feminism and do you consider yourself a feminist?

Details of Lived Experience

8. What were your first years of teaching like? What was the gender/racial makeup of your campus? What influence, if any, do you feel that had on your experience?

9. Tell me about your best teaching placement. How did this affect your sense of self, career aspirations, and sense of purpose?

10. Tell me about your most challenging teaching experience. What about the experience resonates with you?

11. Why do you remain in education? What are your hopes, dreams and aspirations?

12. What resources would you like to see Black female teachers receive?

Bridge to Thriving Framework

13. What is your definition of the word "thriving" in terms of education and what might K-12 thriving look like in terms of campus community?

14. Have you ever felt like you were professionally thriving? What do you believe determines thriving professionally?

15. What might a Black female teacher thriving in K-12 look like?

16. Is there anything we haven't discussed that you think is important to my study on Black teacher retention?

Additional Notes:

Interview #2

Date	

Time of Interview	
Location	
Participant Pseudonym	
Current Job Title	

Thank you for agreeing to a second interview. The purpose of this second interview is for me to ask follow up questions based on our first interview and on responses garnered from other participant interviews. I'd also like to verify your previous responses from our first interview.

Our conversation will last approximately 60 minutes and if it's ok with you, I would like to audio record this interview to help ensure I can make sense of our conversation in subsequent portions of my study. After the interview, you may request a copy of the audio and/or transcripts at any time. The audio recording and subsequent transcripts will not be shared with anyone from your employment and any identifying information will be removed when discussing the interview with my advisor or dissertation committee.

You may choose to stop the interview at any time. If at any time you choose not to answer a question, please let me know and we will move to the next question.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Let's begin!

Bridge to Thriving Framework

1. After interviewing all participants, the word "thriving" in terms of education and what a K-12 thriving looks like, surfaced XXXXX. What are our thoughts regarding this description? Do you have anything to add? Is there anything you disagree with?

2. According to my participants, professionally thriving appears as XXXXX. What are our thoughts regarding this description? Do you have anything to add? Is there anything you disagree with?

3. According to my participants, factors contributing to Black female teachers' ability to thrive, whether experienced or desired, include XXXXX. What are our thoughts regarding this description? Do you have anything to add? Is there anything you disagree with?

4. Is there anything we haven't discussed in either interview that you would like to share?

Appendix D: Research and Interview Question Connections

Research Question	Interview Question	What I hope to find
How has being Black and female shaped teachers' experiences and longevity in the profession?	Tell me about your upbringing. When and where have you felt a sense of community or true belonging? Where were/are spaces where you experience the greatest experiences of laughter, joy, passion and/or purpose? What were your K-12 school experiences like? Can you recall any experiences you feel were based on your racial or gender identity? Did you have any Black female teachers in your K-12 experience? Did having or not having them influence your decision to become a teacher? Where did you earn your Undergraduate degree and teaching credential? What was the racial makeup of your campus and how do you feel that shaped your college experience? How do you define feminism and do you consider yourself a feminist?	What role does race and identity play in the experiences of Black female teachers throughout their lives in the realm of education?
What experiences do Black female teachers describe as being based on historical or systemic racial dynamics?	What were your first years of teaching like? What was the gender/racial makeup of your campus? What influence, if any, do you feel that had on your experience? Tell me about your best teaching placement. How did this site affect your sense of self, career aspirations, and sense of purpose?	What are the shared experiences of veteran Black female teachers throughout their teaching careers? What experiences or relationships created conditions for thriving? What experiences do participants attribute to their race and gender?

	Tell me about your most challenging teaching experience. What about the experience resonates with you? Tell me about your relationships with your teacher colleagues. When have you felt the most sense of belonging or community? Tell me about your relationship with your administrators, parents, and students? When have you felt the most sense of belonging or community? What role do you think your racial identity played in your experiences? Can you share about a time your racial identity affected your professional life? What role do you think your gender identity played in your experiences? Can you share about a time your gender identity affected your professional life? Why do you remain in education? What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations? What resources would you like to see Black female teachers receive?	
What factors do Black female teachers attribute to their remaining in the profession in spite of experiences they perceive to be due to their race and or gender?	Why do you remain in education?	What do Black female veteran teachers attribute to their desire to stay in the profession?
How do Black female teachers define professional	What is your definition of the word "thriving" in terms of education?	What aspects of the "Bridge to Thriving Framework are prevalent in participant responses?

thriving in K-12 environments and what do they attribute to their own sense of thriving throughout their careers?	What might K-12 thriving look like in terms of campus community? What might K-12 thriving look like in terms of your freedom to display selfhood in your work? What might K-12 thriving look like in terms of feeling an abundant sense of support and resources in your work? What might K-12 thriving look like in terms of feeling a sense of pleasure in your work? What might K-12 thriving look like in terms of feeling a sense of relief and support in your work?	

Appendix E: Invitation to Participate in Qualitative Study

California State University, San Marcos

Black Female Educator Retention: Exploring Conditions Needed to Thrive

Invitation to Participate

Dear Educator,

My name is Carol Battle and I am a doctoral candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Education Leadership in the School of Education at California State University, San Marcos and the Department of Education Studies at the University of California, San Diego.

You are receiving this email because it is believed you fit the criteria for the 7-10 Black, female, veteran educators I hope to interview for my research. You are invited to participate in a research study to find asset-based factors that contribute to Black female teachers staying in the K-12 environment in spite of racial and gender related factors.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by me, a fellow Black female educator, twice over a three-month period. Each interview will last about an hour at a mutually agreed upon location and will be in a conversational style. During the interview, you will be asked to describe your teaching experiences from pre-service through your current position. I am particularly interested in your reflections on being a Black woman in these environments and ways in which you were or weren't supported.

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study and identifying information will remain confidential. Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty. You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

Should you be interested in participating, please reply to this email within 5 business days so I may schedule a time to meet with you and send an official consent form. I look forward to the possibility of hearing about your teaching experiences.

Sincerely,
Carol Battle
Doctoral Candidate
CSUSM/UCSD
cebattle@ucsd.edu

Appendix F: Participant Informed Consent

California State University, San Marcos

Black Female Educator Retention: Exploring Conditions Needed to Thrive

Informed Consent

Dear Educator,

My name is Carol Battle and I am a doctoral candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Education Leadership in the School of Education at California State University San Marcos and the Department of Education Studies at the University of California, San Diego. You are invited to participate in a research study pertaining to the career experiences of Black, female, veteran educators. You were selected as a possible participant because you fit the criteria for the 7-10 Black, female, veteran teachers I hope to interview for my research. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY:
The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether to be a part of this study. Information that is more detailed is listed later in this form.

The purpose of this study is to examine Black female teacher longevity in K-12 environments. You will be asked to participate in a series of two, one-hour interviews about your experiences in the educational arena. We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately three months or until all participants have completed both interviews. The primary risk of participation is loss of confidentiality. The main benefit is contributing to the body of literature about Black, veteran, female educators and the conditions and experiences that contribute to career longevity.

STUDY PURPOSE:
The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to examine Black female teacher longevity in K-12 environments. In addition to investigating the professional experiences of veteran Black female educators, Darling-Hammond's Bridge to Thriving Framework and Black Feminism will be used to investigate how Black female teachers perceive their ability to thrive in terms of surviving encounters with oppression, what thriving can be and what's on the bridge to thriving. By examining assets of veteran Black K-12 educators, the study will contribute to a better understanding of how to keep Black female educators in K-12 schools. Analyzing workplace well-being of Black female educators with a healing centered lens of engagement is essential to analyze to determine factors conducive to their longevity in K-12 education. A focus on Black female teacher flourishing and the elements that determine career happiness and fulfillment need to be captured to address Black female teacher longevity. I aim to collect asset-based strategies that can be used to inform teacher education, district and statewide policies and practices.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:
If you agree to participate, you will be one of 7-10 participants who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following: If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by me, a fellow Black female educator, twice over a three-month period. Each interview will last about an hour at a mutually agreed upon location and will be in a conversational style. During the interview, you will be asked to describe your teaching experiences from pre-service through your current position. I am particularly interested in your reflections on being a Black woman in these environments and ways in which you were or weren't supported.

RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:
There are risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include:
1. A potential for the loss of confidentiality.
2. Although the interview is brief, there is a possibility educators may become bored or fatigued.
3.You may feel anxious and/or fearful of being exposed to COVID-19 in the study. You may be at risk of contracting COVID-19.

SAFEGUARDS:
To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:
1. To safeguard the risk of confidentiality, saved data from interviews will include participant pseudonyms and identifiers will be removed upon member checking and no longer having a need to re-contact participants. All interview-related electronic data will be saved on an external hard drive that is password protected. Any paper notes or other material collected will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in my home. Additionally, interviews will occur at a mutually agreeable location that is private.
2. To allay the risk of boredom or fatigue, participants may skip a question or discontinue the interview if they so choose due to the voluntary nature of this process.
3. For all face-to-face research during the COVID-19 health pandemic I am taking the following precautions to minimize the possibility that you will be exposed to the virus: temperature checks, Covid self-screening and mask wearing. Despite these precautions, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is still present.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Your responses will be anonymous and contact information will be kept only for scheduling purposes and kept separate from interview data.

The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name or other personal information as applicable will not be used. Consent forms will be secured in a locked cabinet in my home for the duration of three years, upon receipt, after which they will be shredded and disposed of. Participant emails will be recorded for the purposes of scheduling interviews. Contact information will be kept with consent forms in a locked cabinet in my home, separate from the data.

My dissertation committee and myself will have access to the data collected. It will be stored on an external hard drive and sent digitally to committee members as applicable. All identifying markers will be removed prior to being sent to the committee. All digital data will be permanently deleted in March of 2026. Committee members will be sent reminders to delete any remaining data upon successful dissertation defense.

Saved data from interviews will include participant pseudonyms and identifiers will be removed upon member checking and no longer having a need to re-contact participants. All interview-related electronic data will be saved on an external hard drive that is password protected. Any paper notes or other material collected will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in my home. Electronic transcripts and study related notes will be permanently deleted from the external hard drive and hard copies will be shredded at the end of three years. (Approximately March 30, 2025).

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty. Your decision whether to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with CSUSM or UCSD.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
There are no direct benefits to participation in this study, however, your participation will help reveal policies, practices and procedures that keep Black female teachers in the educational profession for longer periods. Future implications include changes to district and site policies as well as teacher education. Phenomena uncovered regarding Black female teachers could potentially be expanded to overall teacher retention, something that is greatly needed as teachers quickly exit the profession, expedited by the recent global pandemic.

PAYMENT OR INCENTIVE:
You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
If you have questions about the study, please call me at 760-310-7142 or e-mail me at battl01@cougars.csusm.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Joni Kolman at 760-750-8236 or jkolman@csusm.edu. You will be given a copy of this form for your records. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at irb@csusm.edu or (760) 750-4029.

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT:
By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the study. Please check the option that applies to you before signing with the following options:

☐ I give permission for my interview to be audio taped.
☐ I do not give permission for my interview to be audio taped.

☐ I have been informed about the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in this study. I understand that regardless of any precautions taken, a possible risk of exposure to the virus still exists.

Name of the Participant: _____

Signature of the Participant: _____

Date: _____

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