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## African American Women Teachers' Motivation to Stay in the Profession

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Cynthia Y. Adams

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Walden University

2021

Abstract

African American Women Teachers' Motivation to Stay in the Profession

by

Cynthia Y. Adams

MA, Tennessee Technological University 1989

BA, North Carolina Central University, 1986

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

May 2021

## Abstract

Teacher attrition contributes to teacher shortages in public school systems throughout the United States. Some teachers leave the profession because of low salary, job dissatisfaction, lack of administrative support, and infrequent professional autonomy. Researchers have focused on attrition from the perspective of why teachers leave the profession. However, in current literature little is known about what motivates teachers to remain in the profession, including their race and gender. The purpose of this study was to explore African American women middle school teachers' motivation to stay in the profession. In this study, self-determination theory was used as the theoretical framework to address motivation and its various components. Ten African American women teachers at public middle schools in North Carolina voluntarily participated in this study. Participants' voice and perspectives were sought in individual face-to-face interviews to understand their lived teaching experience. This phenomenological investigation explicates the experiences of African American women teachers using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA was used to aid in explaining and describing African American women teachers' motivation. A thematic analysis was used to analyze data. The themes that emerged were motivation, inspired by others, support, and challenges. This indicated that African American women middle school teachers were motivated by their self-determination to be a teacher. The implication for positive social change is the development of policies that support teachers professionally and financially to remain in education.

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## Dedication

I honor my Spirit Guide for leading me through my life journey of living, learning, and teaching. This dissertation is dedicated to my son John “Emmanuel” Adams-McClendon. He has been my driving force of encouragement for believing in myself and completing this doctoral journey. John and Shirley Adams invested their lives to be my parents. They unconditionally loved and supported me no matter what. My Aunt Savona (Sarah Nichols) was an earth angel for ninety years. She dedicated her life to motivating and empowering our family, especially me. Aunt Savona told me that I could do anything if I put my mind to it so, I dedicate this work.

I honor the life of Tonja Faye Adams my Spiritual Angel and baby sister for loving me to do more for sustaining my Greatness. Last, but not least this dissertation is dedicated to African American women teachers who stay in the profession because it is their calling.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI; 2015), 97,000 educators were recruited in 2015 to the profession while 14,000 educators left the profession that year because of discontentment, new occupations, and retirement. The exit of these educators resulted in a loss of 15% of the teacher workforce in North Carolina (NCDPI, 2015). Teacher attrition in North Carolina public K-12 schools contributes to overcrowded classrooms, low student performance, employment of more novice teachers, and school budget deficits (NCDPI, 2015). African American teachers make up 15% of the 97,000 teachers in North Carolina public schools (NCDPI, 2015). As a result, it is imperative to understand attrition and retention from African American women teachers' perspective to ensure effective retention strategies for this important demographic. The NCDPI reports teacher attrition rates and reasons teachers leave the profession but does not explore teachers' motivation for staying in the profession.

Teacher attrition is a problem throughout K-12 public schools in the United States. In the 2013-2014 academic year 3,000,000 individuals became public school teachers in the United States; however, 300,000 teachers exited the profession that year, reflecting a 9% attrition rate (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). Attrition occurred because of teachers' dissatisfaction with their careers, negative school environment, demanding job responsibilities, low salaries, and low student performance (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). Teachers enter and exit the education profession due to many factors. A deeper understanding of African American women

teachers' motivation for staying in the profession could provide specific knowledge to assist with retaining teachers.

In Chapter 1, I provide background information regarding teacher attrition and motivation. I present the problem of teacher attrition and the purpose of this study, as well as the significance of this research. Also included in Chapter 1 are the research questions, theoretical foundation, nature of the study, definitions of terms, assumptions, and delimitations.

### **Background**

Many factors contribute to teachers leaving the profession. The Local Education Agency (LEA) of the NCDPI analyzed teachers' reasons for departing the education profession (Public Schools of NCDPI, 2015). The report included five categories accounting for teacher attrition in the state: (a) change in LEA, (b) family issue or personal cause, (c) dismissal, (d) withdrawal unconnected to LEA, and (e) other reasons (NCDPI, 2014). Hence, teacher attrition is affected by various factors, but understanding the reasons for attrition is valuable for improving retention and recruitment of professional teachers.

Collie et al. (2015) asserted that pressure to improve student test scores, enormous workloads, and a lack of administrative support contribute to teacher attrition. School districts can then become understaffed because of teacher attrition (Collie et al., 2015). It is critical to understand teachers' motivation related to professional longevity. Doing so will aid in developing retention strategies and increasing the teacher workforce (Gu, 2014). Teachers leaving the profession will impact local and national public-school

systems; as a result, it is necessary to explore African American women middle school teachers' motivation to stay in the profession.

The issues contributing to attrition are prevalent among African American women teachers. Simon and Johnson (2015) examined how retaining a diverse population of teachers is related to student achievement and lowering teacher attrition. According to Ahmad and Boser (2014), minority teacher attrition occurs because of "low wages, inadequate qualifications, and job dissatisfaction" (p.14). These drawbacks increase teacher attrition rates and impede retention and recruitment of professionally trained minority teachers (Boser, 2014). There is a significant need for African American women teachers to remain in the profession. The exodus of minority teachers negatively influences students' achievement and hinders professional diversity throughout K-12 education systems (Ingersoll, et al., 2014).

Minority teacher attrition rates often occur because of school administrations, the absence of professional independence, and lack of teaching proficiency (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Understanding African American women middle school teachers' lived experiences in the profession could reveal ways to reduce attrition and develop strategies to retain qualified teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Previous studies have addressed teacher attrition and reasons teachers leave the profession, but what remains unknown is why African American women teachers stay in the profession. In this study, I sought to understand the meaning making of African American women middle school teachers lived experiences teaching and motivation for staying in the profession.

Teachers' motivation to stay in the profession while handling obstacles is paramount for understanding teacher attrition. Some teachers commit to the profession despite barriers because of their motivation to make a difference in students' lives (Hong et al., 2017). Gultekin and Acar (2014) identified that teachers' motivation to teach is driven by their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to make a difference in education. Partee (2014) asserted that African American teachers provide vital information for understanding the profession from their perspective. African American women teachers' meaning making of their lived experiences has been absent from the literature. As a result, it is essential to understand research findings that inform and develop strategies to reduce teacher attrition.

### **Problem Statement**

Researchers have found that overall teacher attrition occurs due to lack of administrative support, lack of autonomy, and low salaries (Boser, 2014). Teacher attrition is growing nationwide, creating staffing shortages, increasing classroom sizes, decreasing the teacher workforce, and funding is needed to hire more teachers (Simon & Johnson, 2015). The attrition rate of African American women teachers is affected by these same elements (Boser, 2014). However, the role of African American women teachers in public schools is necessary for students who need to see diverse representation in the educational setting (Boser, 2014).

The consistent departure of teachers is of great concern (Podolsky et al., 2017). Despite the efforts of school systems nationwide to retain and recruit teachers, few studies address teachers' motivation for remaining in the profession (Day & Hong, 2016).

Some teachers are motivated to stay because of their commitment to making a positive impact in students' lives despite facing barriers (Perry et al., 2015). Retaining motivated teachers is important for student achievement and maintaining high quality professionals in the teaching force. Motivated teachers positively affect students' abilities to learn and excel academically. Intrinsically, teachers generally receive satisfaction that their skills and knowledge are utilized to educate students (Perry et al., 2015). This will likely keep educators in the profession.

The problem investigated in this study was guided by the concerns that research on African American women middle school teachers' motivation to remain in the profession is limited and offers few solutions to the problem of retaining African American women teachers (Podolsky et al., 2017). Nationwide, teacher attrition rates vary due to demographics, district location, salaries, and working environment (Sutcher et al., 2016). North Carolina public school systems addressed beginning teacher attrition by providing mentors, monetary incentive, and professional development for beginning teachers, but teacher attrition and turnover remains a problem (McCoy et al., 2014). Additional research is needed to explore African American women teachers' motivation for continuing in the profession to develop other strategies for retaining teachers. Therefore, building upon the research of Han and Yin (2016), Ingersoll et al. (2014) and Podolsky et al. (2017), this study increased knowledge about teacher retention and motivation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) study was to explain and describe the motivation of African American women teachers who teach in North Carolina public middle schools. In this study, I used IPA to focus on African American women teachers' meaning making of their lived experiences teaching. Smith and Shinebourne (2012) asserted that researchers use IPA to describe an individual's meaning making of their experiences.

### **Research Questions**

My aim in conducting this research was to understand and describe African American women teachers' motivation to stay in the profession. The guiding research questions for this study are as follows:

RQ1: How do African American women teachers describe their lived experiences teaching in North Carolina public middle schools?

RQ2: How do African American women teachers describe their motivation for staying in the profession?

RQ3: What are African American women teachers' motivation challenges to stay in the profession?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this research study is self-determination theory (SDT), which was developed by psychologists Ryan and Deci (2017). SDT addresses the origins of human motivation and personality, which explains individuals' drive for fulfillment. SDT emphasizes individuals' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to accomplish

their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Individuals are intrinsically motivated by innate interest, values, and beliefs for self-mastery (Ryan & Deci, 2017). However, they are extrinsically motivated by such things as rewards, money, and accolades to achieve goals (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Han and Yin (2016) conducted an extensive examination of empirical studies on the topic of teacher motivation that were examined from a variety of theoretical perspectives. I identified that SDT was the appropriate framework for examining teacher motivation. Therefore, using SDT as the lens for this study deepened the scope of understanding and description of African American women teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. I learned how African American women teachers make meaning of their motivation for staying in the profession. I used SDT as a lens to examine African American women teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for staying in the teaching profession. The theoretical framework of SDT was used to develop interview questions and identify themes in analyzing data. Further details of SDT are discussed in Chapter 2.

### **Nature of the Study**

For this study I used the IPA approach (Smith et al., 2009) to explore African American women teachers' experiences and motivation for staying in the teaching profession. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) asserted that the IPA approach is an investigation of how individuals' make meaning of their life events. I chose IPA for this study because it is a tradition of inquiry in which I gained descriptive data from the meaning participants make of motivation (Smith, 2015). IPA is concerned with the

participants and researchers' sense making that leads to a rich analysis of data. A narrative research design was considered for this study to document chronological events of individuals' stories or life experiences, and a quantitative method was considered to examine a correlation between variables or test a hypothesis based on a prediction for statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Neither method was suitable for this study, however, because I wanted to gain a deeper understanding from the participants' viewpoint to describe the meaning making of their lived experiences.

The IPA approach involves analyzing the commonalities and differences that emerge as participants' make meaning of their experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Findings of the IPA research study are co-constructed by participants and the researcher from rich descriptive data (Jeong & Othman, 2016). I used IPA to analyze the data and interpret African American women teachers' lived experiences teaching and motivation for staying in the profession. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) reported that in the IPA approach researchers interpret the meaning participants make of their lived experiences. The process of interpretation uses a hermeneutic approach, where "understanding requires a circular movement from presumption to interpretation and back again" (Willig, 2017, p. 276). The indepth description of a phenomenon from an individual's perception should be relatable to others (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Readers of this study should be able to transfer findings to their research in similar contexts.

Using IPA requires rigorous and exhaustive inquiry of the meaning making of individuals' lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015). In this phenomenological study, I conducted one to one, semistructured interviews to gather data from 10 African American

women teachers to understand their motivation from their perspective. Robinson (2014) posited that small sample sizes should range from “3-16 participants” to identify individual expressions for detailed analysis (p. 29). I described and interpreted African American women teachers’ meaning making of their lived experiences teaching and motivation for staying in the profession. Willig (2017) stated that the researcher’s role is to describe and interpret participants’ lived experiences while remaining open to the unfolding of the phenomenon using phenomenological inquiry.

I conducted individual face-to-face interviews that ranged 30 to 60 minutes, utilizing an electronic recording device to ensure the accuracy of data collected (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Face-to-face interviews are indepth, and participants should feel comfortable to talk openly about their understanding of the phenomenon, experiences, and feelings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The open ended questions used in interviews are characteristic of the usual IPA method for data collection to gather rich information from participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The qualitative researcher asks open-ended and nondirective questions, so participants may reveal their perception of experiences (Willig, 2017). Qualitative data collection methods are bottom-up to permit participants to share their meaning making as it evolves into rich descriptive data, in which themes are identified from participants’ interviews (Willig, 2017). Participants voicing their experiences provides details of the motivation under study.

I audio recorded participants’ interviews and used a transcription service to transcribe the audio recording. Participants signed an informed consent before their interview. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) suggested that the analysis of data requires the

researcher to examine information to gain an indepth understanding of the phenomenon under study from the participants' perception. Participants provided the necessary data for comprehending a phenomenon as a lived experience for obtaining knowledge. As the researcher, I described similarities and differences of participants' interpretations of motivations to stay in the profession.

### **Definitions**

The following terms and definitions will be used in this research study:

*African American:* A person having origins in the Black racial group (United States Census Bureau, 2018)

*Attrition:* The use of the attrition in this study refers to teachers leaving the teaching profession (NCDPI, 2015).

*Extrinsic motivation:* external influences of rewards or incentive that drive behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

*Intrinsic motivation:* The internal desire for satisfaction or self-actualization that influences individuals to achieve a goal or purpose (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

*Motivation:* A force that directs individuals' behavior, to "take action" for fulfilling or achieving a desired outcome. (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p.13).

*Retention:* Strategies utilized to maintain and retain teachers in the profession (McCoy et al., 2014).

*Teacher Motivation:* Factors that draw individuals to education and the education profession and that inspire them to stay in the profession (Han & Yin, 2016).

### **Assumptions**

The focus of IPA research is to understand the participants' lived experiences and describe in detail the accuracy of events (Larkin, 2015). The participants and the researcher construct interpretations of events creating a "third-person and psychologically informed description" (Larkin, 2015, p. 104). One assumption was that this study would add to existing literature and promote social change in teacher attrition. I expected participants to be open and honest to express their perspective of lived experiences in teaching and motivation for staying in the profession to provide meaningful data.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The study included semistructured interviews with 10 African American women teachers who teach in public middle schools in North Carolina. I used IPA to understand and describe African American women teachers' lived experiences and motivation for staying in the profession. The IPA study contains the fundamental aspect of participants' meaning making that "gives voice" to their lived experiences as shared through the interview process (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, p. 101). The interviews for this study were limited to African American women middle school teachers who have been in the teaching profession for at least 5 years. I was not concerned with middle school principals, students, or other school officials because they could not provide information about African American women teachers' lived experiences teaching. In qualitative research, the description and interpretation of data should assist the reader in transferring relevant information into their environment or context (Gadoud et al., 2014). The potential for transferability can be established from rich thick descriptive participant

interviews. Therefore, readers could recount equivalent experiences, which demonstrates transferability.

### **Limitations**

Research limitations are defined as a possible weakness of a study over which the researcher has no control (Cohen et al., 2013). This study is limited to participants who are African American women teachers in North Carolina public middle schools.

Restricting the research to only African American middle school women teachers does not account for the voices and lived experiences of other teachers in K-12 public and private schools. Participants in this study were recruited from one geographical location, which limits the exploration of teachers from other areas in the country.

As the researcher, it was necessary for me to put aside my personal experiences and biases to have a clear perspective of the phenomenon under study (Callary et al., 2015). Bracketing is used in phenomenological inquiry for setting aside the researchers' biases, preconceived opinions, and experiences (Callary et al., 2015). I identified my preconceived notions and experiences by using the reflective process of bracketing. Reflexivity involved me as the researcher assessing my lived experiences teaching, which could have affected the research process. Smith and Nobe (2014) asserted that IPA researchers' biases are unavoidable but should be bracketed by using a reflective journal to record ideas, thoughts, and prejudices. My experience as a teacher in North Carolina public schools could influence the data analysis due to my biases. It was necessary for me to write in a reflective journal those preconceived notions and experiences. This helped to reduce my potential influence on the data analysis of African American women teachers'

motivation for staying in the profession. In IPA studies, the focus is participants' description of their meaning making of their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). During the data analysis, I bracketed my assumptions to better understand and describe African American women teachers' meaning making of their lived experiences teaching.

### **Significance**

This proposed research will add to the existing research concerning African American women teachers by examining their meaning making and lived experiences of teaching. African American women teachers' voices described their motivation for staying in public middle schools in North Carolina. Further, an in-depth analysis of motivation to stay in the teaching profession from African American women teachers' perspective and experiences offered strategies, solutions, and approaches to retain teachers. The focus on retention supports the United States Department of Education initiative to promote equality, quality education, and the hiring of qualified teachers (United States Department of Education, 2015). The descriptive analysis and interpretation of African American women teachers' lived experiences may promote social change by increasing North Carolina school district administrators' knowledge about how to support and retain educators. Islahi and Nasreen (2011) posited that comprehending teachers' motivation could provide a wealth of information for recruiting motivated teachers. Further, the more African American women teachers explain their lived experiences of teaching, strategies can be developed to retain and motivate African American teachers.

While examining African American women teachers' lived experiences teaching, it was critical to understand the impact that current systems have on demotivating teachers. The voices of African American women teachers are needed to increase understanding of how to develop strategies for teachers' professional growth and retention. According to Robertson-Kraft and Zhang (2016) implementing teacher evaluation systems that support professional growth and enhance skills that affect students' achievement could improve teacher retention.

The teacher evaluation systems are methods that can extrinsically motivate teachers to improve their teaching performance and student's achievement. However, Thomson and Turner (2015) suggested that political officials can create policies that increase financial resources for retention and recruitment of motivated teachers.

This research is significant to African American women teachers, school administrators, and school districts. The data analysis from this research study can be used to solicit funding and gain support from stakeholders and businesses in North Carolina to retain and recruit teachers. The research builds on existing research that addresses retaining teachers.

### **Summary**

Teacher attrition has increased throughout the United States due to the absence of administrative support, independence, and insufficient salaries (Boser, 2014). In addition, teacher attrition decreases the number of education personnel, enlarges teacher student ratios, and increases school budgets to hire educators (Simon & Johnson, 2015). African American women teacher attrition rates are affected by certain common factors (Boser,

2014). Although researchers have provided information about teacher attrition, there is a need to understand teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. The focus of this research study was to understand and describe African American women teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. The IPA method was used to examine African American teachers' lived experiences teaching in North Carolina public middle schools. In Chapter 2, I include the literature search strategy used, the theoretical foundation, and a review of the literature related to teacher attrition and motivation.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In this literature review, I will specifically focus on teacher attrition and motivation. I will address the issues of teacher attrition and African American women teachers' motivation to remain in the profession. Teachers are leaving the profession because of nonsupportive administration, low morale in school environments, and meager salaries (Suther et al., 2016). The teacher attrition rate is rising each year, causing a shortage of teachers throughout the United States. Suther (2016) stated that in the United States "300,000 new teachers will be needed by the year 2020, increasing to 316,000 teachers by 2025" (p. 87). Retaining teachers and recruiting new teachers is necessary to stabilize the education profession.

Increasing understanding of teachers' motivation for staying in the profession could help researchers build on existing literature that examines teacher retention and recruitment strategies. Teachers who remain in the profession are often influenced by their intrinsic motivation to fulfill a desire, calling, and commitment (Eren, 2014). Future research is needed to address attrition issues; however, understanding why teachers remain is equally important (Battle & Looney, 2014). The exploration of African American women teachers' interest in teaching and their motivation to stay in the profession will help to fill a gap in the literature. This chapter includes a literature review on topics related to teacher attrition, retention efforts, teachers' professional development, and factors that motivate teachers to teach. It also includes an explanation of the literature search strategy and theoretical framework.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The review of the literature will include peer-reviewed articles from Walden University library databases, internet resources, and books. The database search included Google Scholar, ProQuest, SAGE, Thoreau, and Academic Search. The keywords used to search the literature included: *Black teachers, female teachers, minority teachers, teacher attrition, teacher retention, teacher professional development, pre-teacher preparation, commitment, resilience, and motivation*. Several studies addressed teacher attrition and motivation, but fewer studies were found regarding African American women teachers' motivation to stay in the profession. An advanced search was conducted with the assistance of a Walden Librarian, using citation chaining to obtain articles, dissertation, and books related to African American women teachers.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical foundation for this study is self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT originates from applied scientific research on human behavior and personality development, including various aspects of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT is an extensive framework that examines individuals' motivation using six mini-theories: "(a) cognitive evaluation theory (CET); (b) organismic integration theory (OIT); (c) causality orientations theory (COT); (d) basic psychological needs theory (BPNT); (e) goal content theory (GCT); and (f) relationships motivation theory (RMT) to differentiate the many characteristics of motivation and personality" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p 20-21). In this research study, BPNT is used as the premise for understanding African American women teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. BPNT addresses individuals'

intrinsic and extrinsic motivation based upon their fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness for psychological growth and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Individuals are motivated to satisfy these three needs by engaging in activities that are self-determined for a sense of control or autonomy (Van den Broeck et al., 2008). When individuals engage in opportunities or events that enhance their knowledge and skills, they have a sense of competence for mastery of basic psychological needs. Van den Broeck et al., (2008) posited that individuals' competence is enhanced when challenges are pursued to learn new skills for adapting in various situations or environments. Therefore, individuals need to relate to others with the same or similar interest for support to fulfill their ultimate desire or purpose.

Ryan and Deci (2017) proposed that SDT explains the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on individuals' behavior to fulfill basic psychological needs in different social contexts. Individuals' intrinsic motivation occurs when they participate in activities for personal pleasure that promote self-mastery (González-Cutre et al., 2016). For example, an individual chooses to teach in a low performing school because the personal reward is that their work leads to student academic achievement. This happens when individuals commit themselves to challenging activities that others might see as unpleasurable. However, individuals' extrinsic motivation drives them to focus on obtaining rewards, such as financial compensation or promotion (González-Cutre et al., 2016). For example, an individual's career may not bring them pleasure, but perhaps career rewards are more beneficial to this individual than personal pleasure.

According to Ryan and Deci (2017), individuals' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is differentiated by their autonomous and controlled behaviors. Autonomous behavior is exhibited when individuals' motives are of their own volition, fostering a sense of freedom (Van den Broeck et al., 2008; Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT explains individuals' autonomous behavior as standing for what they value and believe (Chirkov et al., 2003; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). However, autonomous behavior consists of extrinsic motivation when external regulations align with individuals' values. A teacher might value education intrinsically and be extrinsically motivated to maintain his/her teacher certification. Therefore, the teacher's behavior is considered autonomous because he/she values his/her profession and will adhere to external requirements, which are an extrinsic motivator.

SDT researchers utilize an extrinsic motivation continuum to explain four levels of controlled behaviors: these are external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The first level is external regulation, in which an individual's behavior is motivated by conforming, seeking rewards, and avoiding punishment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, an individual's behavior is externally motivated when he/she follows company guidelines to avoid being dismissed from his/her job assignment. Individuals move to the second level of controlled behavior, which is introjected regulation, because external control is minimum, and self-control is demonstrated (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, an individual participates in work-related events or social activities to gain acceptance from his/her employer or

coworkers to avoid being ostracized. This behavior is introjected regulated because of the individual's desire to avoid feelings of shame or guilt.

The third level of control is identified as a regulation in which individuals' behavior is more autonomous, with minimum external control (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Individuals' extrinsic motivation is identified as regulation when they are engaged in activities that are interesting and promote a sense of importance. An individual pursues a specific career with a world-renowned company because it gives him/her a sense of importance. Furthermore, integrated regulation is the final level of control demonstrated by individuals' intrinsic behavior with external regulation that is cohesive with their values (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

Individuals are extrinsically motivated at this level when their achievement or success is based on external standards and not their need for pleasure. Gagne and Deci (2005) posited that SDT distinguishes between behaviors that are volitional, which relate to autonomous experiences and regulate behaviors that control experiences. Ryan and Deci (2017) suggested that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are defined by an individual's behavior as either autonomous or controlled to satisfy basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

### **Assumptions of SDT**

According to Ryan and Deci (2017), individuals have an inborn disposition to satisfy basic psychological needs. This premise of SDT suggests that individuals must be motivated to nurture their basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It is assumed that these basic psychological needs are experienced by all individuals (Chen et

al., & Ryan, 2015). This experience includes all cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, work, and social environments.

Therefore, individuals are in control of interests or activities that support their values (Gagné & Deci, 2014). An individual may become a teacher because they value teaching students to be knowledgeable, productive citizens. So, their need for competence is motivated by a desire to utilize their knowledge and skills to impact the lives of students through teaching (Gagné & Deci, 2014). For example, a teacher's competency is demonstrated through his/her pedagogical method to engage students in a learning process.

Deci and Ryan (2008) stated that the assumption is that individuals are self-motivated to pursue an interest that gives them a sense of success with compensation. However, SDT addresses the fact that individuals' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influence their ability to flourish. SDT suggests that individuals are motivated when they receive support and encouragement from their environments, such as work, home, or social networks (Van den Broeck et al., 2008). The lack of support lessens individuals' motivation to satisfy their basic psychological needs.

Within SDT the element of relatedness is described as a key component for individuals to have a sense of importance and belonging in various social contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Individuals are compelled to relate to others with the same or similar interest for support and comradery (Gage & Deci, 2014). An example would be teachers who join organizations to connect with other professionals for support and to enhance their knowledge. Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are considered necessary for

individuals to thrive for optimal well-being (Chen et al., 2015). This assumption is “SDT’s organismic-dialectical meta-theory,” which perceives individuals as organisms that are equipped to satisfy their basic psychological needs (Chen et al., 2015, p. 217). Therefore, individuals are motivated to satisfy their needs because it is essential for their psychological growth and well-being.

### **Prior Application of SDT**

Goroziadis and Papaioannou (2016) stated that an individuals’ achievement is related to their level of self-determination and motivation to engage in activities that improve competence, autonomy, and relatedness. They used SDT as a theoretical framework to focus on the cause of teachers’ motivation to meet their need for fulfillment. In this research study, competence was measured to understand basic psychological needs that must be satisfied to sustain teacher motivation.

According to Goroziadis and Papaioannou (2016), teachers’ autonomous motivation is intrinsic because it elicits interest and pleasurable feelings. Teachers’ extrinsic motivation fosters the need for competence to acquire recognition and rewards. Goroziadis and Papaioannou (2016) stated that additional research is needed to increase understanding of how to develop educational environments that foster teachers’ autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Fernet et al. (2016) posited that it is important to understand teacher motivation for choosing teaching as a career. Teachers who enter the profession are often motivated by their autonomous desire (intrinsic) rather than by controlled factors (extrinsic). SDT provided a framework in this study for distinguishing the difference between teachers’

autonomous and controlled motivation and understanding how teachers see to their psychological well-being (Fernet et al., 2016; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). Teachers' autonomous motivation is prevalent in many dimensions of their life including committing to their career choice. Furthermore, SDT is used as a framework to explain the effects of autonomous (intrinsic) and controlled (extrinsic) motivation as it relates to teachers' job satisfaction and career choice (Fernet et al., 2016; Levesque et al., 2004). Teachers' job satisfaction is predicated on their need for autonomy to support their interest, which brings them pleasure. Fernet et al., (2016) and Levesque et al., (2004) suggested that teachers-controlled motivation adversely affects individuals' job satisfaction because some demanding job responsibilities contribute to psychological stress

Gagne and Deci (2005) suggested that SDT as the theoretical foundation can be used to predict teachers' autonomous and controlled motivation related to their schoolwork environment. Teachers' work environment can be a resource for satisfying teachers' need for relatedness by providing a place to develop professional relationships. According to Fernet et al. (2012) teachers need to relate to other professionals to regulate controlled motivation created within the work environment. Controlled motivation regulates individuals' behaviors in a work environment, but when individuals develop supportive relationships it creates a balance between autonomy and control motivation. In Fernet et al. (2012) previous study, SDT was used to identify the effect autonomous and controlled motivation had on teachers' relatedness. In summary, SDT has been applied to research studies that analyzed teachers' motivation.

**Relevance of SDT to the Current Research.**

SDT is an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding teacher motivation and teacher attrition in the United States (Han & Yin, 2016). It provides a foundation for understanding factors that influence teacher motivation to satisfy their basic psychological needs. Ryan and Deci (2017) stated that SDT explains individuals' motivations for satisfying their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, SDT is useful for exploring African American women teachers' motivation to stay in the profession based on autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

**Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

The literature review for this study relates to concepts associated with African American women teachers who stay in the profession. Therefore, the concepts of teacher attrition, teacher retention, and teachers' motivation are explored in this literature review.

**African American Women Teachers**

Historically, African American women teachers entered the teaching profession to improve the lives of Black people during the 1950s, which was the era of segregation (Farinde et al., 2016). African American women teachers were surrogate mothers, role models, and community advocates for Black students to improve the quality of their lives. According to Dixson and Dingus (2006) "African American women teachers come to teaching as part of a legacy of Black feminist activism that has sought to maintain cultural practices, address racial and economic inequity, and facilitate the development of youth" (p.832).

During the era of segregation African American and White students were not allowed to attend the same schools, which promoted unequal education. Teachers both African American and White were only allowed to teach at schools of their race. The 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas*, legal case changed the American education system because the United States Supreme Court mandated that schools were to be desegregated (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014). Desegregation meant that Black and White students and teachers would be integrated into White schools.

Black women teachers would be downsized, and Black schools would no longer exist (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014). African American teachers were not readily accepted at White schools. This historical event changed the plight of African American women teachers forever because they lost their jobs or took jobs that were available in White schools (Lash & Ratcliffe, 2014). The *Brown vs Board Education* decision negatively affected the educational trajectory of African American students and teachers at that time.

Since that time there has been a steady need for African American women teachers in education. Farinde et al. (2016) asserted that African American women teachers are needed to influence the education and development of the increasingly diverse student population. It is important to reflect diversity in the teaching profession to model for students a diverse professional working society (Boser, 2014). Teachers with the same ethnicity as their students can positively impact students' academic achievement and future success. Dixson & Dingus (2006) posited that African American women teachers often foster students' learning through their pedagogy methods by understanding students' cultural and social experiences. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017)

stated that some African American women teachers are committed to staying in the profession to improve the lives of students, but others chose to leave the profession.

### **Teacher Attrition**

According to Sutchter et al. (2016) teacher attrition refers to teachers leaving the profession. African American women teacher attrition transpires due to these women's dissatisfaction with school leadership, pay, and promotion opportunities or lack thereof (Farinde et al., 2016). Research studies revealed that teacher attrition is more likely to occur among new teachers within the first 5 years of their career compared to teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014).

In the beginning of a teachers' career, they experience a transition period of "student teaching to teaching students" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 683). This transition period means that before teachers begin to teach, they gain knowledge and then become teachers who apply their knowledge in a classroom setting with students. Harfitt (2014) asserted that beginning teachers decide to remain in or exit the profession after their transition period because they become aware of job responsibilities and workload requirement that may contribute to job or career satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Some teachers explore the profession before deciding to remain or exit the profession (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2016). During their exploration they may realize that they no longer identify with becoming a teacher and then choose another career. Lindqvist and Nordänger (2016) posited that teacher attrition can be defined as a process that transpires over a span of time or occurs because of school environment and job responsibilities, but sometimes teacher attrition is unavoidable. For example, teachers

leave the profession because of health issues, retirement, and resignation. Teacher attrition can be distinguished as transfer or exit attrition. Transfer attrition is when a teacher relocates to another school for job satisfaction. Exit attrition occurs when a teacher leaves the profession.

Struyven and Vanthournout (2014) asserted that understanding new teachers' motives for entering education and leaving within a 5 year period are key for exploring early career exit attrition. Early career exit attrition occurs when some certified teachers chose not to enter the profession and others quit within 5 years. However, exit attrition is affected by "five reoccurring factors: school administration, school environment, teacher student relationship, job responsibilities, job satisfaction, and other profession opportunities" (Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014, p. 43).

Consequently, teacher attrition increases due to the lack of school administrative support because school administrators utilize an authoritarian leadership style to control teachers' teaching methods and classroom management, and to discourage autonomy, which creates a stressful work environment (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). One factor that is associated with teachers' decision to leave or stay in the profession is optimistic and unfavorable elements of job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017 & Burkhauser, 2017). For example, a teacher's job satisfaction correlates with satisfying their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, but job dissatisfaction is produced when the school administration is controlling and assigns extra duties (Ingersoll et al., 2016). Another factor that increases teacher attrition is a school environment that does not promote safety, warmth, cleanliness, and professional

support (Burkhauser, 2017; Fernet et al., 2016). These factors are considered reasons teachers leave the profession.

African American women teacher attrition occurs for similar reasons as other teachers mentioned before. However, African American women teacher attrition “rates are 21.8% greater than non-African American teachers’ rate of 13.4%” (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 170). The teacher attrition discrepancy between African American women teachers and non-African American teachers can be attributed to personal reasons for departing education. There is limited research that addresses African American women teachers being “involuntarily pushed out” (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017, p. 181. “Involuntary push-out” means that African American women teachers were downsized for reasons related to schools downsizing.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2016) completed a study that explored variables that contribute to 523 Norwegian high school teachers’ stress and motivations for departing teaching. This quantitative research study was conducted using a questionnaire to collect data. Teachers’ perception of stress in relation to “student discipline, limited time to complete work, students’ low academic performance, student diversity, and discord with colleagues, and lack of administrative support” (p.1795) are factors that lead to teachers leaving. The findings of this research indicate that teachers are negatively affected by different stressors that impede their motivation to teach. It is suggested that elementary and middle school teachers’ reasons for departing the profession be included in future studies. Overall, teacher attrition increases because of teachers’ personal and professional concerns that affect their ability or desire to remain in the profession.

## **Teacher Retention**

African American women teachers have voiced their need for administrative support, increases in salary, and opportunities for advancement as issues that must be addressed by school districts and policymakers (Farinde et al., 2016). These issues are conducive to African American women teachers' job satisfaction and retention. Farinde-Wu and Fitchett (2018) suggested that job satisfaction and retention contribute to African American women teachers' longevity in education. It is noted that African American women teachers find job satisfaction while working in urban schools.

Farinde-Wu and Fitchett (2018) stated that African American women teachers often choose to work in urban schools because of their personal experiences and understanding of the urban community. Teaching in urban schools evokes a sense of pride and career accomplishment, which contributes to African American women teachers' job satisfaction. Farinde-Wu and Fitchett (2018) posited that African American women teachers' job satisfaction is linked to specific school cultures and environments that support their values, growth, and professional autonomy. School cultures refers to administrators, teachers, and communities that collaborate to provide a positive atmosphere for educating students.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) stated that policies must be created to focus on retaining African American women teachers to increase stability in the teaching profession. Increasing the African American teacher population would provide students with a diversity reflective of the workplace. Therefore, policymakers should address the need for retaining qualified teachers by increasing school budgets for teacher

retention and replacing teachers (Podolsky et al., 2017). The United States Department of education and local school districts should collaborate with policymakers to help them understand teacher attrition issues, thereby facilitating the development of effective funding and incentive strategies for teacher retention (Podolsky et al., 2017).

Policymakers focus on teacher attrition and understanding teachers' reasons for entering the profession to develop retention strategies. Podolsky et al. (2017) asserted that "support; pre-teacher preparation training; advancement and financial compensation are reasons teachers remain and leave education" (p. 22). These researchers recommended that policymakers in the United States should consider developing recruitment and retention action plans that are specific for supporting novice and veteran teachers throughout their career. These policies could assist school districts in maintaining a stable teacher workforce. The United States Department of education and local school districts should collaborate to recruit and retain quality teachers.

According to McCoy et al. (2014) some new teachers leave within the first five years in the profession. Many solutions have been suggested to increase teacher retention. The solutions that seem most effective to reduce attrition are induction and mentoring programs for a new teacher (McCoy et al., 2014). These programs provide teachers with support, additional training, and standard assessment for professional development. North Carolina Public school districts implemented beginning teacher orientation and mentoring retention strategies for building supportive professional teams of qualified educators (McCoy et al., 2014).

Teachers' training has been analyzed as a cause of attrition. Retaining qualified teachers requires exploring different teacher preparation methods. Zhang and Zeller (2017) stated that some teachers enter the profession by obtaining a degree in education, using lateral entry, and completing alternative licensure programs that have been identified as limited opportunities for recruiting and retaining teachers. These limited opportunities affect teacher attrition and turnover because teachers do not receive the necessary training before entering the teaching profession.

Zhang and Zeller (2017) identified 9 variables related to teacher retention: "age, career plans expressed during the first year of teaching, having children, ethnicity, gender, level (elementary, middle school, or high school), marital status, parents' occupation, and type of preparation" (p. 81). The study revealed that only teacher preparation showed predictive validity for retention. Teacher preparation efforts focus on training individuals for a teaching career. Therefore, teachers may enter the profession through obtaining a degree in education, lateral entry licensure program, or a special teaching alternative program (Zhang & Zeller, 2017).

Lateral entry teaching programs allow individuals with a college degree to teach while earning their teaching licensure. Mid-career professionals can become teachers by entering a one-year alternative teaching program to become licensed teachers. The retention strategies that focus on pre-teacher training, professional development, mentoring, and administrative support could be beneficial in retaining African American women teachers within school districts (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017).

## **Professional Development**

Professional development programs that are designed to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge often improve retention rates of quality teachers. Bayar (2014) stated that teachers who are engaged in professional development activities are satisfied with their job and affect students' academic success. Effective teacher professional development programs are created with teachers' input. Bayar (2014) stated that teachers should voice their needs for professional development that includes "1. needs of seasoned teachers; 2. schools' needs; 3. teachers' input for professional development; 4. experiential activities; 5. long-term training, and 6. qualified instructors" (p. 323). It is important that teachers' voices are heard regarding their needs to develop as competent educators.

Evers et al. (2017) reported that effective teachers who maintain healthy well-being and invest in their professional development make a commitment to education. In this research study, the Demand-Induced Strain Compensation (DISC) model was used to examine teachers' job stress, motivation, and well-being (Evers et al., 2017). The results revealed that there was correlation between teachers' job requirements, resources, and professional development. Evers et al. (2017) stated that school districts should provide professional development resources and support for teachers to efficiently manage job responsibilities.

Preparing teachers to be excellent educators requires understanding the importance of preservice teacher programs for training and retaining quality teachers. Vagi et al. (2017) focused on teacher quality and attrition by exploring preservice teachers' career choice and experience. Preservice teachers are often hired because of the

extensive training received before entering the profession (Vagi et al., 2017).

Furthermore, preservice teacher training or professional development is a predictor for reducing teacher attrition. According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017), African American women teachers who engage in teacher training develop the necessary skills to be effective educators in the classroom.

### **Teachers' Motivation to Teach**

Teachers' motivation is related to their need for satisfaction and personal and professional relationships that foster professional learning (Durksen et al., 2017). To support teachers in maintaining their motivation and well-being, opportunities are needed for professional learning (Durksen et al., 2017). Professional learning is defined as teachers' ability to be accountable for their intellectual, emotional, and general well-being for optimal professional growth and competence (Durksen et al., 2017). In comparison, teachers' professional development is often facilitated for them and not tailored to meet their learning needs.

Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus (2014) suggested that teacher motivation is important to the educational process for teachers' success and students' achievement. When teachers invest in their professional development, they often remain committed to education. According to Thomson and Turner (2015) teachers' motivation and professional growth are significant for decreasing attrition and increasing retention. Salifu (2014) asserted that teachers who are motivated to teach persevere despite barriers that prevent them from utilizing their knowledge and skills. Teachers of Ghana Education Service reported that it is challenging to provide quality education without motivation,

encouragement, and support from education services. Teachers experience stress and demotivation when the work environment is negative.

Fransson and Frelin (2016) asserted that teachers 'sustained commitment to teaching is relevant to their beliefs and resilience to face challenges. Factors that contribute to teachers' commitment to remain in education include their ability to teach students to be successful. Researchers Han and Yin (2016) conducted a comprehensive review of studies that focused on teachers' motivation from different theoretical viewpoints. In reviewing the literature, they identified 5 themes in relation to teacher motivation: "influence factors; teaching effectiveness; student motivation; different disciplines; and assessment" (p.1). Understanding teachers' motivation to stay in the profession was crucial for determining causes of teacher shortage and attrition.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The review of the literature provided an overview of various research studies that focus on teacher attrition, retention, and teachers' motivation to teach. Overall, the literature revealed that teacher attrition affects the United States school system's ability to provide students with a quality education. Teachers leave the profession because of enormous workloads, job dissatisfaction, and lack of support. It is important to develop new retention strategies that reduce teacher attrition to strengthen the profession.

Addressing teachers' motivation for remaining in education provides information for understanding how to retain teachers beyond 5 years. In conclusion, the literature review established a need for more solutions to the problem of teacher attrition and increased understanding of why African American women teachers stay in education.

The findings from this proposed study will add to current research regarding teacher attrition and African American women teachers' motivation for remaining in the profession. In Chapter 3, I will describe the role of the researcher, the study methodology, the participant selection process, instrumentation, data analysis, and issues of trustworthiness.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to increase understanding of and describe African American women teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. I used a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of African American women teachers. In this chapter, I described the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, and data analysis procedures. Included are details of issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures that verify the quality of this research.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How do African American women teachers describe their lived experiences teaching in North Carolina public middle schools?

RQ2: How do African American women teachers describe their motivation for staying in the profession?

RQ3: What are African American women teachers' motivation challenges to stay in the profession?

### **Central Phenomenon of the Study**

The central phenomenon of this study was the motivation of African American women teachers who stay in the profession. I used IPA as the approach to understand and describe individuals' lived experiences (Smith, 2015). The IPA approach involved collecting and interpreting data from participants' perspectives. I organized themes that emerged from the process of analyzing data to make sense of participants' experiences.

Smith (2015) stated that IPA is the qualitative method that is utilized to understand, describe, and interpret the lived experiences of participants. Marshall and Rossman (2014) asserted that individuals' perception of an experience was the focus of qualitative research. Individuals' perception provides details about the phenomenon of study.

### **Interpretative Phenomenology as the Research Tradition**

According to Smith and Shinebourne (2012), IPA research is an investigative method that is used to explore how individuals make meaning of their lived experiences. The foundation of IPA includes phenomenology and hermeneutics constructs. The phenomenological aspects address individuals' description of a phenomenon as it relates to their lived experiences. In conjunction, hermeneutics is the interpretative process that allows the researcher to make sense of individuals' meaning making of their experiences (Jeong & Othman, 2016). Researchers who use IPA contribute their understanding of individuals' meaning making in combination with individuals' making sense of their lived experience, which is double hermeneutics (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The researcher and participants review collected data to validate accuracy of information.

Jeong and Othman (2016) asserted that IPA is a qualitative method that is used to "examine the specifics of individuals' lived experience, their meaning of a phenomenon experienced, and how individuals' make sense of their experiences" (p. 558). IPA was the most appropriate design for understanding and describing African American women teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. I considered a narrative study as a possible qualitative approach because individuals tell their story. Narrative researchers study individuals' stories, experiences, and meaning, which are constructed through

retelling of stories (Andrews et al., 2013). However, IPA was used to examine and explore lived experiences of a small sample size of individuals to understand a phenomenon from different perspectives (Smith, 2015), and this was more consistent with the nature of the study.

### **Philosophy of Phenomenology**

Phenomenology inquiry was used to describe individuals' lived experiences from their perspective (Jeong & Othman, 2016). The phenomenological philosophy was developed by Husserl, who was concerned with an individual's conscious experience about phenomena (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Heidegger, a student of Husserl, developed the hermeneutic method of phenomenology, which is the interpretation of an individuals' description of the meaning-making of events or lived experiences. The IPA approach is supported with theoretical ideas of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Smith & Osborn, 2015). The phenomenological aspect concentrates on individuals' profundity and detail of an experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). For example, teachers' view of teaching may vary based on their lived experiences. The goal of phenomenology is to describe what and how individuals perceive an experience rather than describe a phenomenon from a predefined method (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

Thus, the hermeneutics process "gives voice" to individuals' meaning making through the researchers' interpretation related to the phenomena (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p.3). Therefore, different themes emerge from the analysis of data providing a better understanding of the phenomena. IPA is an idiographic approach that focuses on analyzing individuals' meaning making rather than a population (Pietkiewicz & Smith,

2014). The IPA researcher can describe in detail nuances of individuals' lived experiences. In IPA research participants and researcher coconstruct findings through face-to-face, semistructured interviews (Jeong & Othman, 2016).

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research and particularly in IPA, the researcher is the instrument for collecting data, interpretation, and analysis (Smith, 2015). The researcher is responsible for each phase of the study from concept through design, selecting participants, interview, transcription, and analysis of data (Sanjari et al., 2014). I attempted to understand participants' meaning making of their experiences and then analyze data and report findings.

As the researcher of this study, I worked as a professional development trainer, teacher, substitute teacher, teacher assistant, and tutor with K-12 public school teachers in North Carolina. I may have recognized the names of potential participants because we may have worked in the same public-school environments. If this occurred, I informed participants of my role as researcher and their right to withdraw from the study. I held no power over participants because I do not work in an administrative or supervisor capacity, but biases occurred because I shared similar experiences with participants. Creswell (2009) stated that the researcher will bring their own ideas, experiences, and biases to research. I made efforts to be impartial to all participants, treating them with respect and maintaining their confidential information.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) recommended that biases be monitored so that they do not influence the data collection process. I used a journal to write thoughts and

experiences to assess how my biases inform my work with the participants and the analysis of the data. Utilizing an interview guide assisted me with remaining focused on collecting data. Chan et al. (2013) stated that the researcher must be aware of their assumptions, judgments, and ideas before researching to minimize influence on the research process. Bracketing is the process that I used to remain aware of my own influence in the research process. I set aside my judgment and beliefs to make sense of African American women teachers' meaning making of their lived experiences in teaching. The researcher is expected to suspend viewpoints to comprehend the context of the phenomenon participants described (Finlay, 2014, p. 123). I focused on participants' voices as they described their experiences in response to research questions.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection**

The participants in this research study were 10 African American women teachers with at least 5 years of teaching experience in North Carolina public middle schools. The criterion for teaching 5 years is based on prior research that suggests teachers leave the profession within 5 years (Struyven & Vanthournout 2014). In IPA purposive sampling is used for selecting a small number of participants to address the research focus and questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). According to Callary et al. (2015) IPA researchers are concerned with understanding the lived experiences of a small sample because of the rigor involved in collecting information from each participant. Robinson (2015) stated that in qualitative research sample size is not a fixed number of participants, but consists of a range to obtain a rich, indepth understanding of participants' lived experiences. The

purpose of a small sample is to allow the “voices of participants” to be heard as they share the meaning making of lived experiences” (Robinson, 2015, p.29). Participants selected for an IPA study were those who provide information about the phenomenon being studied because of their lived experiences (Draper & Swift, 2010).

### **Instrumentation**

According to Smith, (2015) the researcher is the instrument used to collect data. As the researcher of this study, I used face-to-face semistructured interviews with participants to elicit detailed responses. In qualitative research, semistructured interviews are guided by the researcher using open ended questions to gain an indepth understanding of the phenomenon of interest, in this case, African American women middle school teachers’ motivation for staying in the profession (Smith & Shineborne, 2012). Interviews with participants are the best method to establish open, honest communication so that participants can describe rich details of their experience (Leonidaki, 2015). I contacted participants a day before the initial interview to confirm time and location of the library meeting room or agreed upon convenient location. Smith and Shineborne (2012) recommended that interviews should be scheduled to allow adequate time for asking questions and addressing possible challenges. No interviews began until the participant returned the signed informed consent.

According to Rabionet (2011) the most useful instrument that captures participants’ voices of their lived experiences is semistructured interviewing. Semistructured interviews are designed to be flexible so participants can be comfortable to express their thoughts and feelings (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). I created a safe

comfortable interviewing environment, free from distractions and interruptions. The semistructured interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, so there was enough time for participants to thoroughly describe their lived experiences without coercion. According to Smith and Shineborne (2012), interviews should start with asking “a descriptive question about the present before asking reflective questions” to encourage participants to share information (p. 76).

When I interviewed participants, I introduced myself, thanking them for agreeing to participate, and asked them about their day to establish a warm rapport (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). During the beginning of each interview, I provided highlights of the research study and asked if they had questions or concerns. I followed the interview guide (Appendix A) for each interview to assure that the research purpose and questions were addressed.

Researchers should develop an interview plan to include how to address moments of silence and use prompts when questions are too general to gather in-depth information (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p.10). The interview guide included prompts that promoted participants to provide more information or elaborate for clarity. During moments of silence participants and I had an opportunity to reflect on interview questions. IPA interviews are conducted in one hour increments and are usually audiotaped to develop a transcript (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). I recorded participants' interviews using a digital recording device that captured their meaning making of their motivation to stay in the profession. I hired a professional transcriptionist to transcribe each interview but used REV a transcription service. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality agreement.

Participants reviewed their verbatim transcript for the truthfulness of the information. I reviewed the interview recording and transcripts, made notes of themes that emerged as a method for analyzing data.

### **Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

#### **Recruitment**

I recruited participants through the teachers' social committee. The North Carolina public school teachers' social committees often help build camaraderie among teachers. Each school's social committee is different because participation is optional, the committee is independent from regular school functions or requirements, and teachers determine their own mission. The teachers' social committee chair was the gatekeeper for recruiting African American women teachers for this research study. Gatekeepers are individuals or organizations that can assist the researcher in recruiting participants for research studies through their approval or network of influence (Creswell, 2009). I contacted the teachers' social committee chair by phone to provide information about my research. I emailed the chair the invitation flyer for recruiting African American women middle school teachers with at least 5 years of teaching experience. The teachers' social committee emailed the invitation flyer to potential participants. The emailed invitation flyer included research purpose, participation incentive, my name, and my contact information so participants contacted me directly via email and telephone.

I called African American women teachers by phone who responded to the emailed invitation flyer and explained in detail the nature of this study and informed consent. If the participants agreed to be part of the study, I emailed an informed consent form.

Participants were asked to reply via email “I consent” to participate in this study. After, I received their email reply “I consent” then I scheduled a face-to-face interview. Three participants consented to be interviewed. Therefore, I utilized the snowball technique by asking initial participants to recommend other potential participants for this study. The snowball technique is considered useful for recruiting additional participants through initial participants (Emerson, 2015). I recruited 7 additional participants for this study.

### **Participation**

The criteria for participation in this study was that participants are African American women teachers who have taught in a public middle school in North Carolina for at least 5 years. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) stated that gathering data from a small homogeneous sample can provide an indepth investigation of the phenomena. Therefore, I interviewed 10 participants to collect rich thick descriptive data. I asked participants to read and sign an informed consent confidentiality statement. I informed participants that participation in this research was strictly voluntary. Participants could leave the study at any time without repercussions. As an incentive participants were awarded \$25.00 at the conclusion of their interview.

A sample size of 6 to 10 participants is enough to gather adequate data, but saturation can occur when no new information has developed from participant interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015). According to Emerson (2015) data saturation occurs when data collected from participants no longer adds to the research study’s purpose. In this study I interviewed 10 participants.

**Data Collection**

Face-to-face interviews were conducted at a convenient North Carolina local public library meeting room and participants' classroom. Each semistructured interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes using an audio recording device to obtain detailed information. At the end of the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to debrief with me to eliminate any misconceptions and answer potential questions before leaving the interview. I provided participants my contact information if they had further questions. Participants' interviews were transcribed verbatim for analyzing data. I emailed each participant their transcriptions to review for accuracy of information so that they could make any necessary corrections. Participants were asked to participate in a follow up phone call or email communication if additional information is needed or for clarification.

**Data Analysis Plan**

The IPA analysis process requires the researcher to be flexible while carefully paying attention to data details. Analyzing data involves organizing and examining data, so the researcher can see “patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, make interpretations, and generate theories” (Jeong & Othman, 2016, p. 562-563). There is a step-by-step procedure or different phases to analyzing the data. Analysis does not move in a linear fashion, but instead moves back and forth through phases or recursive strategy (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis process is developed using the following six phases:

1. The IPA researcher becomes immersed in data by reading and re-reading participants' transcripts and listening to the audio recordings several times (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). I read transcripts and listen to audio tapes intently and look for patterns or meanings that may arise. During the data review, I took copious notes to identify ideas for coding to be used in different phases (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).
2. After I read and reread transcripts, I used codes to distinguish certain parts of data that relate to research questions, assist with interpretation of participants' meaning and are descriptive in nature to the content. Braun and Clarke (2006) asserted that data codes are used by the researcher to focus on interesting aspects of data that relate to the phenomena. The data was arranged or categorized in significant groups before developing themes. A computer file and index cards to code and combine relevant data information are useful tools for grouping data for codes (Braun & Clarke, 2012).
3. The researcher searches for themes that connect to the research questions, which "represent patterned responses or meaning within data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). The researcher identifies a method to compartmentalize codes into themes. Therefore, the researcher may write codes on different colors of paper with a short synopsis and then sort by themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some themes were combined to create categories of most significant themes.
4. This phase is a two step process that involves back and forth movement or recursive strategy to examine the quality of themes. According to Braun and

Clarke (2012) the first step requires the researcher to evaluate the themes in accordance with data and determine if they are relevant. Some themes were recategorized or eliminated. The second step includes reexamining themes and their connection with data. In this step I rereads data to ensure that themes were a representation of the data collected providing a better understanding of the research purpose.

5. I defined themes to grasp the meaning of the data by presenting a written analysis of how each theme related to the content. To ensure that themes do not overlap the researcher must examine how the themes correlate with data and research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). During this phase refinement of themes were necessary to determine if sub-themes exist within themes. Another objective of refinement is to articulate themes concisely and assign names that describe their essence (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
6. The final phase involves writing up the IPA research study. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) stated that the final themes are to be written with a description to include relevant information from participants' interviews and the researchers' analytic ideas. Therefore, the report provides a story using the analysis of data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It was important to use participants' direct words so the reader could understand their voices as they describe their lived experiences. This phase presents participants and I as cocreators of the research.

## **Issues of Trustworthiness**

### **Credibility**

In qualitative research, the validity of the research study is determined by credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability to demonstrate the trustworthiness of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researchers' responsibility is to examine the accuracy of data to ensure it is credible. According to Cope (2014) participants and researcher verify the accuracy of interview transcripts or information for authenticity. To establish credibility the researcher may use different strategies such as triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks (Anney, 2014). Triangulation is the use of various methods, theories, notes, and interviews to provide an interpretation of the data and explain the phenomena (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). For example, investigator triangulation may involve several researchers exploring the same issue but offering contrasting viewpoints.

Another credibility strategy is member checks in which the researcher returns participants' interview transcripts for them to critique and offer comments or corrections (Anney, 2014). Member checks involve asking participants to review their information for accuracy, understanding, and inferences developed from their interviews (Creswell, 2012). I listened to participants' audio recording and reread written transcripts twice to ensure credibility of data.

The use of peer debriefing allows professional colleagues or supervisors to assist the researcher with improving their research by offering feedback and ideas and pointing out potential biases (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). To employ peer debriefing, I solicited my

research committee for ideas and feedback for data collection and analysis. Finally, qualitative research must be credible to prove the study's purpose and justify findings.

### **Transferability**

The researcher is responsible for providing an indepth "thick description and purposeful sampling" for the context of the research (Anney, 2015, p. 278). A thick description provides a wide range of detailed information related to the background and methodology, so the reader can compare the context of this study to their context of experiences (Anney, 2015). Transferability occurs when others not associated with the research are able to relate to the experiences in another context. The researcher explains in detail the research purpose, participants' demographics, data collection process, and analysis, which could assist the reader with understanding participants lived experiences (Shenton, 2003). In this study, I established transferability by providing a thick description of data using the voices and experiences of participants, which could be relatable to other readers in a different context.

### **Dependability**

Cope (2014) asserted that consistency and duplication of findings reflect the dependability of a qualitative research study. The researcher authenticates findings of data collected to assure other researchers can reach similar findings. The strategies I used to establish dependability are audit trail and triangulation. An audit trail is comprised of the researchers' description of how the data is collected, recorded, and analyzed (Anney, 2015). This audit trail process assists researchers with evaluating whether the findings are a true representation of the data. Golafshani (2003) asserted that the triangulation process

is an assessment of data to enhance the validity of research analysis. Therefore, I compared different participants' perspective to compare and develop themes.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability occurs when the researcher can establish that participants' data is void of their biases (Anney, 2015). It is critical that the researcher records biases and beliefs in a reflexive journal for bracketing information that could interfere with the research study validity (Lewis, 2016). I used a reflexivity journal to record my thoughts, opinions, events, and reflections that emerge during data collection minimizes my biases. Cope (2014) posited that confirmability pertains to the researchers' proficiency to accurately document participants' data and refrain from interjecting personal views, opinions, and reactions. Within themes, I included participants' direct quotes for the purpose of confirmability.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical research practices were followed during the process of collecting data, analysis, and documentation (Smith, 2011). I acquired Walden University Institution Review Board (IRB) approval before beginning my research. After receiving permission from IRB, I composed an invitation flyer that explained the nature of my research, participant criteria, and my contact information. Then, I called the teachers' social committee chair by phone, explained my research study, and asked for their assistance in emailing the invitation flyer to recruit potential African American women middle school teacher participants. I thanked the teachers' social committee chair for their assistance and then emailed them an invitation flyer.

I was employed at a North Carolina public K-5 elementary school. This means I had no interaction with North Carolina public middle school teachers daily. I was not in a position of authority or influence over public middle school teachers. Those interested in participating in this study was asked to contact me using information provided in the emailed invitation flyer. Upon receiving responses from potential participants, I contacted participants by phone before scheduling an interview. In my conversation with potential participants, I explained the nature of the research, answer questions, discussed participants' right to participate and withdraw from the study at any time.

Individual face-to-face interview was scheduled after participants agree to be involved in this research study. Each participant completed and signed an informed consent form via email with a reply of I consent, voluntarily agreed to participate. Pseudo names were given to participants to ensure confidentiality. At the end of participants' interview I informed them that a one to two page report of research results would be available upon request. Participants received \$25.00 as a thank you for their time and contribution, after completing their interview.

The protection and privacy of participants is important; I informed participants that no harm was associated with participating in this study. Participants' information and research data is kept in a fireproof locked file cabinet for 5 years; I have the key. All information stored on a computer was protected by using a password to ensure confidentiality of participant information; only I have the password. During the research process participants had the right to discontinue participation in this research study without any penalty. Access to this information is granted to the researcher, participants,

research committee, and Walden University. Participants will be provided a one to two page report of research results by contacting researcher via email.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I described in detail the research design, rationale, and IPA. I explained the IPA research tradition and its ‘relevance to research questions pertaining to African American women teachers’ motivation to stay in the profession. The researchers’ role and responsibility as instrument for collecting data was outlined. This chapter included the methodology and issues of trustworthiness to provide a thorough understanding of how data was be collected and procedures for conducting quality research. In Chapter 4, I included participants’ demographics, participants’ data, results of data, and detailed analysis.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the lived experiences of African American women teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. Prior studies focused on teacher attrition; however, what motivated African American women middle school teachers to stay in the profession remained an unexplored topic. The participants in this study used their voices to describe their experiences during individual face-to-face interview. The research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1: How do African American women teachers describe their lived experiences teaching in North Carolina public middle schools?

RQ2: How do African American women teachers describe their motivation for staying in the profession?

RQ3: What are African American women teachers' motivation challenges to stay in the profession?

In this chapter, I present the procedures used to conduct interviews, the setting, participant demographics, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter also included an in-depth description of the data analysis process, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

### **Setting**

On August 9, 2019, I contacted via telephone a public school teacher social committee chairperson who was the gatekeeper for recruiting African American women middle school teachers in this study. The gatekeeper is a person or group that is influential in assisting the researcher in recruiting potential participants (Creswell, 2009).

I contacted the social committee chairperson after I received Walden University IRB approval (No. 08-08-19-0201502). During our conversation, I explained the research study and emailed an invitation flyer to be distributed to potential participants. The chairperson emailed the invitation flyer to potential participants on August 12, 2019. Within a few days, three potential participants contacted me via text message expressing their interest in the study. I contacted all participants via telephone to introduce myself, explain the purpose of the study, and schedule an interview at a convenient location. Participants were emailed an informed consent form, and each replied they consented to participate in the study. Each participant was made aware that they would receive \$25.00 at the completion of their interview as a token of appreciation.

The three participant interviews were scheduled between August 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. After public school began on, August 25, 2019 no more potential participants responded to the invitation flyer. I contacted the teacher social committee chairperson via telephone, to ask if she would send the invitation flyer through other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to recruit more potential participants, but there was no response during a 4-month period.

I then used snowball sampling by asking former participants via email to recommend potential participants before public school closed for winter break in December 2019 and after reopening January 2020. To recruit more participants for research, a snowball sampling technique allows former participants to recommend potential participants (Emerson, 2015). Through snowball sampling, I gained an additional seven participants. These participants were interviewed during the months of

January and February 2020. I conducted individual face-to-face interviews with a total of 10 participants. There were no personal or organizational conditions that could have influenced participants or their experience at the time of the study.

### **Demographics**

The participants in this study were 10 African American women middle school teachers. Their experience ranged from 5 to 26 years of teaching in North Carolina public schools. The education level of participants ranged from a bachelor's to master's degrees. Two participants obtained bachelor's degrees: one in education and one in science; seven other participants hold masters in various disciplines, such as education, administration, curriculum, and instruction. Most participants attended a historically Black college and university, and one attended a predominately White institution for their bachelor's degree.

Each participant gained professional knowledge from using the North Carolina middle school common core curriculum. Seven participants teach middle school English and language arts; one participant taught middle school music, one participant teaches middle school math; and one participant teaches middle school science (see Table 1). All participants taught for more than one public middle school.

**Table 1***Description of the Participant Demographics*

Participants	Attended Undergraduate College or University	Highest-Level of Education	Subject Area	Certificate	Years In Profession
P1	HBCU	Master's degree	ELA	Administration	24
P2	HBCU	Master's degree	Math		5
P3	HBCU	Bachelor's degree	ELA/ Social studies	AVID	24
P4	HBCU	Master's degree	ELA/ Social studies	National Board	15
P5	PWI	Master's degree	Music		21
P6	HBCU	Master's degree	ELA		26
P7	HBCU	Master's degree	ELA / Social studies		24
P8	HBCU	Bachelor's degree	ELA		5
P9	HBCU	Master's degree	ELA	Curriculum/ instruction	14
P10	HBCU	Master's degree	Science		7

*Note.* HBCU = historical Black college/university, PWI = predominantly White institution, ELA = English/language arts, AVID = Advancement via individual determination

**Data Collection**

I conducted individual face-to face interviews with 10 African American women middle school teacher participants. The interviews were held at public libraries in a private meeting room or in the participants' classrooms, between August 2019 and February 2020. The duration of interviews was between 30 to 60 minutes. Prior to each participants' interview, I informed them that I would keep their identity confidential by assigning them a participant number, such as P1, P2, etc.

During each interview, I used two audio recording devices and made handwritten notes to capture important details of participants' lived experiences and specific quotes. A reflexive journal was used to write down my ideas, reactions, meanings, and thoughts. The reflexive journal was used to bracket my experiences so participants would be given my undivided attention. After each interview, I told participants that I might contact them to ask follow-up questions for clarification or elaboration. Participants could debrief with me and ask questions for clarity at the conclusion of interviews or contact me via email and telephone after the interview.

I transcribed each interview using REV, a transcription service, and saved them to a flash drive. A professional transcriber had signed a confidential form agreeing to transcribe the participant interviews, however, was unavailable when it came time to do so. This was a variation from the original data collection plan; however, it did not interrupt the transcription of interviews. When completed, I emailed the participants their recorded audio and transcribed interview to review for accuracy. Participants were instructed to review their transcript and email me any corrections. One participant emailed me their transcript correction, so I noted those corrections for the final transcription of their interview.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed the research data using an IPA approach, which included phenomenology and double hermeneutic. Phenomenology inquiry was used to describe in detail what and how participants understood their motivation for staying in the profession. The double hermeneutic process involved participants' making sense of their

lived experiences, while I also made meaning of their lived experiences (see Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

To continue the data analysis process, I used the REV transcription service to transcribe participants' audio recordings to extract detailed information. I listened to each participants' recorded audio interviews and read their transcripts four times. I made notes on transcripts as I listened to audio recording. I noted participants' tone of voice, specific quotes, and key experiences. Within the notes, I also identified similarities and differences between participants.

These notes were used when I relistened to audio recordings while rereading the transcripts to fully comprehend meaning. I examined the participants' transcripts line by line, then I developed focused codes that were significant for addressing the research questions. I designed three columns in a Microsoft Word document that identified the text, line by line, and focused codes (see Table 2). Each participant's transcript was analyzed using this table to establish the codebook and family of codes. At the end of each table, I wrote a memo that reflected my thoughts regarding the participant's interview.

**Table 2***Example of Participants Transcript Analysis*

Text	Line by Line Coding	Focused Coding
<b>P1:</b> I wanted to teach from as early as I could remember	Wanted to teach at young age	Early calling and passion for becoming a teacher
<b>P5:</b> Because there are not a lot of people that look like me in this profession. Okay. They're not a lot of African American music teachers.	Not a lot of African American music teachers	Motivated to stay in the profession because not a lot of African American music teachers
<b>P9:</b> Education has been in my blood. It's what I am supposed to do. Everybody in my family is a teacher. My father was a teacher	Education has been in my blood. It's what I am supposed to do. Everybody in my family is a teacher.	Family of educator in her blood to be an educator

I used the codebook to make meaning of each code relevant to participants making sense of their experience. Codes were grouped according to similarities. Each focused code was colored coded to identify similarities between participants data. To create themes, I constantly moved back and forth while reviewing codes to extract appropriate themes. The themes were reexamined to determine their relevance for providing a better explanation of the data. The four themes that emerged were: motivation, inspired by others, support, and challenges (see Table 3). The table describes themes, sample statements capturing the core aspect and nature of the themes, and participants' responses. In this study, there were no discrepant cases.

**Table 3***Themes*

Theme	Sample Statement	Participants
1. Motivation	I truly teach for kids. Kids are motivation Motto “Do it for the Kids” Enjoy teaching middle school students	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
2. Inspired by others	Influenced by middle school African American teacher	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9
3. Support	Synergize to create a powerful team	P1, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10
4. Challenges	Blamed for students’ lack of academic achievement	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10

**Evidence of Trustworthiness****Credibility**

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability are aspects of establishing the validity of research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To establish the credibility of data I asked participants to review their transcribed interviews. All 10 participants were emailed their transcribed interview to make corrections. Participants only needed to return their corrected transcript. Only one participant returned her transcript with corrections.

**Transferability**

Transferability occurs when the research findings have the potential to be transferred to similar populations (Anney, 2015). I established transferability by providing rich, thick descriptive data and using purposive sampling so that participants' voices were explaining their lived experiences. This data should be germane to others in similar contexts; therefore, another researcher could repeat this study using every aspect of the research study.

**Dependability**

In qualitative research dependability is the stability and reliability of finding as recorded (Cope, 2014). To understand participants lived experiences, I aligned the research purpose, demographics, and analysis to provide indepth information and address the research question. I described how the data were collected, interviews were transcribed, and data analysis was conducted. This description demonstrated the use of an audit trail. The triangulation procedure for evaluating data for validation included participants, face-to-face interviews, and making comparisons between the transcribed interviews. These procedures led to the emergence of themes that provided a better understanding of the phenomenon. I asked Dr. Verdinelli, my committee chair to provide her research expertise by reviewing my data collection and analysis process and offering feedback. Her feedback assisted me with improving the study.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is accomplished when the researcher has taken measures to alleviate their biases from interfering with participants' data and the entire study (Anney,

2015). I accomplished confirmability through recording my thoughts and beliefs in a reflexive journal. The reflexive journal was used to bracket information that could cause the research to be invalid. Participants' direct quotes were used in the themes which demonstrates confirmability.

### **Results**

The purpose of this IPA investigation was to gain understanding of African American women teachers' lived experiences and perspectives of motivation for staying in the profession. Ten African American women teacher participants shared their motivation for staying in the profession during individual face-to-face interview. The participants' description of their lived experiences contributed to addressing the research questions. The research questions and four emerging themes are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4***Themes and Participants' Vignettes by Research Questions*

Research Question	Themes	Examples of Participants' Responses
<b>RQ1:</b> How do African American women teachers describe their lived experiences teaching in North Carolina public middle schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation (passion for teaching)</li> </ul>	<p><b>P1:</b> I wanted to teach from as early as I could remember, I enjoyed my experiences as a public, as a middle school teacher.</p> <p><b>P2:</b> Yes. Math has always been my concentration. I love what I do. I love the energy from the students.</p> <p><b>P3:</b> Um, but it's, I love it, I enjoy it It's fulfilling. I might not see the long term effect of it because you know the kids grow up and they move on and they have their own lives, but it's a, it's a job that you can see your work.</p>
<b>RQ2:</b> How do African American women teachers describe their motivation for staying in the profession?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Inspired by others</li> </ul>	<p><b>P4: Motivation:</b> I think that yes, what I'm doing right now, I think that's what God want me to be doing because it's been me transitioning or getting opportunities have been easy.</p> <p><b>Inspired by Others:</b> Inspired by African American and Caucasian English teachers love for the subject</p> <p><b>P5: Motivation:</b> Because there are not a lot of people that look like me in this profession. Okay. They're not a lot of African American music teachers.</p> <p><b>Inspired by Others:</b> My family, I've always, my, my um, mom's sung in the house, um, my dad was in a singing group, um, just in church</p>
<b>RQ3:</b> What are African American women teachers' motivation challenges to stay in the profession?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Challenges</li> </ul>	<p><b>P6: Challenges:</b> I think the challenge for me was, um, lack of resources, lack of teachers that were in it for the same reason. I don't see myself doing it, um, past five years more. I'm not motivated anymore. I'm doing it right now because I have to pay some bills and I haven't figured out what I'm going to do next,</p> <p><b>P7: Support:</b> Like there's a teacher at my school now, she is a were on same level. She's a rock star. So now it's like we're trying to synergize and become a powerhouse team.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> So, the expectations of us are very high. Our demands are very, very high and it does become stressful.</p> <p><b>P8: Support:</b> Wilson, my principal... He believes that teachers first he believes in, um, making sure that his teachers, mentally, physically, spiritually are good. When our assistant principal walks into the door. There is someone from the County because my principal is very, he loves me a lot.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b> I said, cause every time we have a meeting you adding on something and not taken away nothing. Changes in education.</p>

## **Motivation**

Participants' sources of motivation to stay in the profession were described as: (a) calling, (b) faith, (c) passion for teaching, and (d) middle school students. First, a calling was defined as someone who believes intrinsically that they must carry out a specific duty or task. Participants voiced that motivation was an internal call that led them to teach students. They understood that their calling to teach was to enhance students' academic development and make a positive difference in education.

Some participants were motivated by their faith to teach. They defined faith as trusting in an individual, God, or a higher power to fulfill their calling to teach students. P6 believed that she was called by God to teach students. This participant's intrinsic motivation was the maintenance factor in her decision to teach students. P9 expressed that her faith motivated her in this way:

Motivation is definitely a piece in my faith. Um, it keeps me going when times are rough, I instantly prayed. Um, another thing that motivates me are my students and my teachers. I wake up every day to make sure that they are great. I made sure that that's, I'm excited to come to work because I don't know what I'm going to expect and how that's going to change. But because I've been called, I realized that I got to do whatever it is I'm supposed to do and touch wherever it is I'm supposed to touch so then they can do their job. And so my motivation is driven because I want to make sure that I do my part so that they can do their part. And I don't know what that looks like. I just know I got to do my part and that means I have to wake up and that means that I have to come to work. And that means that

I have to push through even when I'm tired, because I model the behavior that I want them to see.

Participants' motivation was related to their passion for teaching. They believed a passion for teaching was transferred from their love for sharing knowledge with students. One participant expressed she loved teaching so much that after retirement she plans to teach in another state. For some participants, their passion for teaching started at a young age when they pretended to be a teacher. They would imagine that their toys were students. P6 said that she knew at a young age that she would grow up to be a teacher because she loved pretending to be a teacher by teaching her stuffed animals. It appeared that this passion for teaching was a key component to entering the profession and for the participant continuing their careers in education.

Participants voiced that their passion for teaching meant having a deep love for the subject they taught. A middle school English teacher loved the subject so much that she wrote fiction books for middle schoolers. This is a demonstration of her passion to teach students in the classroom and beyond to enhance their academic development. Participants' passion for teaching could be considered as their self-determination to fulfill a need for autonomy and competency. P7 reported that she was determined to teach English because of her passion for literature and desire to motivate students to engage in learning. Each participant described passion for teaching as an essential ingredient for being a middle school teacher.

Another source of participants' motivation to teach and stay in the profession was their students. P3 shared that she loves her students and job. Many of the participants

stated they enjoyed teaching middle school students. Participants believed that middle school students needed guidance and support during their adolescent development. The middle school math teacher said she found teaching middle schoolers fun because she could engage them in learning. She believed that she was a role model to her students.

All participants were motivated intrinsically to enter the teaching profession. They described motivation and passion for teaching as important ingredients for being a middle school teacher. In essence, the participants felt needed by their students, which ignited their passion to continue their teaching career. Some participants knew intrinsically that they would one day become a teacher because of their calling, faith, passion for teaching, and love for teaching students.

### **Inspired by Others**

Participants shared they entered the teaching profession because of other people's inspiration. The people who inspired participants were sometimes family members, teachers, and community leaders who served as their role models. These role models encouraged participants to become caring teachers who enjoyed teaching and helping their students to grow. One participant shared that when she was in college she volunteered at an elementary school where a first-grade teacher inspired her to become a teacher because she loved teaching students. For example, P3 expressed:

The first-grade teacher, and I cannot remember her name, but the first-grade teacher just loved her, she loved her students and they loved her. She didn't care where they came from. She didn't care who their parents were. She did not care. If you walked through her door... You were loved. And I mean, I felt that.

Participants associated feelings of happiness with being inspired by their role models to teach. When participants talked about being inspired by their former teachers, they spoke words of gratitude and great respect. They believed their role models were one of the reasons they remained in the profession. P5 who teaches music was inspired by family and others around her who loved music.

My family, I've always, my, my um, mom's sung in the house, um, my dad was in a singing group, um, just in church and, um, I never forget, um, I had a teacher named Ms. Price and Ms. Price could sing, but she was, she was like a third-grade teacher, but she sung all the time. We, we had music and um, and she could play the piano. And so, we would go into the, uh, piano was down in a basement and she would take us down in the basement and we would do little plays and stuff. And I just thought, I mean, she was a little dainty lady and I just kept saying, I want to be like her, you know, I like what she's doing. I, I like the way she made me feel. It was a good, happy feeling. Happy. Yes. Yes. And then, you know, if you're my mom, my mom's sung, everything, I mean, she would wash dishes. She's sang sweeping the floor. She's sang, and my dad also, you know, be in the garden, he's got a tune and um, they were happy. And so, to me, music equated to being happy at the same time. It could be a mournful situation, but you still put in everything you got into it. You put in all your feelings into, it's a way of, um, expressing whether it's joyful or sad.

The inspiration participants received from others seemed to work as an extrinsic motivation that satisfied their intrinsic motivation to become a teacher.

Therefore, inspiration from others as role models taught them how to be a passionate educator that shares love and knowledge with all students. It was important for participants to connect with others to pursue a career in education.

### **Support**

Participants voiced that to continue teaching it was imperative to have a support system that included mentors, coworkers, and principals that provided encouragement, acknowledgement, and professional assistance. Having a support system motivated the participants to be effective teachers who engaged students in learning. Many participants gained support when they collaborated with coworkers to develop innovative teaching ideas and address students' issues. When participants received praise and public acknowledgement from their principals, they felt supported, which motivated them to remain committed to teaching. P8 believed her principal appreciated her and thought she was a good teacher. She vocalized the following sentiments:

My principal is the first Caucasian man I've ever had as a principal. Far as a person he's absolutely amazing, absolutely amazing. He's family oriented. He believes that teachers first, he believes in, um, making sure that his teachers, mentally, physically, spiritually are all together what hinders it is the people below him. He communicates, he's very articulate. He's a Harvard grad, but he's just, he's not trying to be something he's not. He's a white man and he stands in that. And what I like about him is I honestly would follow him for the rest of his career.

P10's experience of support promoted her growth professionally.

I do feel the support, the support. I will say I am supported here at the charter school, being that it is a smaller school district as opposed to CMS (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools), you know, as far as, their support they have the resources to have coaches and all these things. We don't have that here just because of the size of school and we don't have the amount of money that a school district does. However, um, we have the autonomy to go out and find our own professional development. Or if we do an observation and they will say, okay, I think you need to work on this either she will help find professional development or even buying books in certain areas.

Participant 1 valued the respect and autonomy her principal gave her.

So, my principal was really good, but she allowed me the flexibility to be me as a teacher. Not sure that if I did not have the experience that I had and if I wasn't coming from where I was coming from, that I would have been allowed that flexibility. I work within the guidelines and did what I was supposed to do, but I felt like she trusted me to, to do so when I came into work every day when I came into the classroom every day I'm teaching from bell to bell because that's what I do because that's what was expected from an administrator. And so, you know, she didn't come into my classroom, see me sitting down the kids playing or whatever. I got one thing to do and that's teach. That's what I'm doing. And so, um, I think she's very supportive.

Participant 9 felt that she needed to create a family of support with her coworkers.

Her thoughts were the following:

I call teachers bro and sis, Hey brother, sister. If your older than me, Hey auntie, because we're family, we're, we're all sowing into our children. So, the children are my niece and nephew that makes you my sister and my brother. That's all I know. I don't want to build a team because teams can dismantle. I don't have to like all my family. I can't choose who my family is. But at the end of the day, you're my family. I'm gonna fight for you. I'll fight with you and we're going to be in it. So, all I've known when I build is that I build a family. I don't build a team because it can be dismantled, and you can have different things and you can't maneuver. I build family. And when I build the family, you build the culture, you build the trust, you build the relationship so that when you leave, you then go and build a field somewhere else because that's what you've been taught.

Participants stayed in the profession with support from those who believed in their ability to teach. It was important for participants to receive external support for guidance, comradery, and to develop their professional identity in education. The benefit of relating to other educators promoted the improvement of education for teachers and students. Participants expressed that being supported by their principals and fellow teachers made them know they were respected and valued.

### **Challenges**

Participants described their challenges to motivation as issues or circumstances that made it difficult to stay in the profession. The challenges that participants endured were low salaries, stress, no teachers' union, limited resources, and lack of support from school principals. Participants' challenges were external and pushed them to focus on

their passion to teach. They were determined to show up daily to teach students and improve education. Participants 2 found that what she considered challenges did not hinder her from being a teacher.

I really don't like how in North Carolina I think me coming from Ohio- because I'm a northerner, I would appreciate if they had unions. Unions are for teachers and just... I wish that they were also... there should be an increase in, um, salary- And it also hurts me that they don't, um, they don't pay for education So with the fact that I just got my master's degree. I think they're working to put in place to pay more- ... but it's not set in stone. So, kind of.. for some people it's like that's not really a motivation to, to get your education because you're not going to get paid for it. We had a strike for it in May to get increase in salary, so I think after... if you got a master's degree after 2013 you're not grandfathered in. So, you're not going to get additional money for your higher degrees. I truly do it for the kids that's like my motive. Motivation my motto, do it for the kids. I do everything for the kids.

However, even when participants faced these challenges, they were a clear source that lower their motivation to stay in the profession. For example, P6 stated that the many years of dealing with continuous challenges have decreased her motivation to stay in the profession.

I think the challenge for me was, um, lack of resources, lack of teachers that were in it for the same reason. At this point. Um, and I've told people this, I don't see myself doing it, um, past five years more. I'm not motivated anymore. I'm doing

what I need to do to pay my bills right now. I still give the children that I work with 100% but the back of my mind, I know that this is not gonna change this situation that they're in. Oh yeah. And that's why I like to teach too, because it's like this puzzle every day, you know? And every year you get a new puzzle that you got to put together. By the time you figure it all out, the year is over.

Participant 7 stated that teaching students has turned so challenging that it became stressful.

It's, it's very stressful. Um, you know, differentiation in the classroom is a big thing. You know, not all kids learn the same way and that that's true. We recognize that. But when you're dealing with behavior issues, it's hard to have a group over here and a group over here when you're constantly putting out fires all around cause they, that's what they want to see. How are you differentiating? What are you doing different for Sally? So, it's very challenging now in education.

Participants became aware of challenges to motivation after entering the teaching profession. The challenges that participants encountered occurred because of the difference in support for teachers and school principals. However, the challenges presented opportunities for participants to improve student achievement and their school.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe African American women teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. African American women teachers voiced their perspective while describing their lived experiences during

individual face-to-face interview. Each participant interview provided indepth data that addressed research questions. The analysis of data revealed four themes: (a) motivation, (b) inspired by others, (c) support, and (d) challenges. These themes represent the essence of participants meaning making of their lived experiences.

The first research question of this study was: How do African American women teachers describe lived experiences teaching in North Carolina middle schools? Many of the participants expressed that their lived experience was an internal calling to teach students to become engaged learners. Some stated that their purpose was to be a middle school teacher.

The second research question was: How do African American women teachers describe their motivation for staying in the profession? The participants of this study responded that their passion for teaching and desire to make a positive difference in the lives of students was their motivation to stay in the profession. Finally, participants addressed the question: What are motivation challenges to stay in the profession? They believed the motivation challenges were limited teaching autonomy, low salaries, limited support from principals and school district. Participants expressed motivation challenges contributed to their thoughts of leaving the profession, but their passion for teaching was the reason they stayed.

This chapter presented data collection and analysis from a purposive sample of ten African American women middle school teachers. The interpretation of findings, limitation of study and recommendations are presented in Chapter 5. The implications for social change are also addressed in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this IPA study was to gain a deep understanding of African American women middle school teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. I investigated how African American women teachers described and made meaning of their lived experiences teaching in North Carolina public middle schools. My goal was to provide an understanding of the lived experiences of African American women teachers and to build on present literature associated with retaining teachers. Motivation of African American women teachers to stay in the profession was the phenomenon studied. Therefore, descriptive data were obtained via semistructured interviews from ten participants who shared their meaning of motivation. Data was interpreted and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Previous research showed that teacher attrition continues to rise in the United States because of limited administrative support, micromanagement, and low salaries (Boser, 2014). Simon and Johnson (2015) stated that teacher attrition affects educators' longevity and strains school systems finances. This study aimed at understanding motivational factors that kept African American teachers engaged in the profession. Participants of this study described their motivation to remain in the profession as a calling to teach despite challenges. These participants believed students needed them as a role model to represent diversity in the classroom. According to Boser (2014) there is a need for diversity to provide students an experience that is a mirror image of society. Overall, African American women teachers voiced that they were motivated intrinsically

and extrinsically to stay in the profession. In this chapter, I interpret these findings as they relate to the existing literature on the topics of teachers' motivation to stay in the profession as well as provide limitations and recommendations for future study.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings of this study both confirmed and extended empirical knowledge about teachers' motivation to stay in the profession. All themes that originated from this project are supported by findings in the existing literature. In this study the insight gathered from African American women teachers voicing their lived experience demonstrated that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are fundamental for staying in the profession. By comparing the findings from this study to the foundational understanding of teachers' motivation, future directions for research and practice can best be informed.

### **Motivation**

Sources of motivation were a major theme that emerged in this study. Participants described their motivation to stay in the profession as a calling, faith, passion for teaching, and deep interest in middle school students as their teaching target. In this study, African American teachers mainly spoke to the intrinsic sources of motivation. This theme is well-represented in the existing literature on teachers' motivation. Durksen et al., (2017) asserted that teachers' motivation is related to their job satisfaction, personal, and professional development. This suggests that teachers' motivation derives from their need for satisfaction and development to enhance their intellect and foster well-being.

According to Han and Yin (2016), teachers' motivation to stay in the profession is linked to their ability to teach a subject that impacts student achievement. This present study identified that some African American women teachers' intrinsic motivation drives them to fulfill their mission to teach African American students. Some African American women teachers believed their purpose was to educate Black people for their betterment (Farinde et al., 2016). The previous research studies are consistent in reporting African American women teachers are motivated to remain in the profession to help their racial group. Teachers often remain committed to the profession because students are their inspiration (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). According to Wu and Fitchett (2018) African American women teachers are often inspired to work in certain schools because they sympathize with students as well as understand the community. This is consistent with reports from participants of this study. A unique finding from this study was participants' description of motivation as a commitment to their faith and calling.

Participants in this study extensively expressed that their passion for teaching, their love for the task of transferring their knowledge to children, helped them carry on in face of barriers and challenges. This was consistent with literature on teachers' motivation, teachers who are motivated to teach and who embrace their profession persevere despite barriers (Salifu, 2014). Teachers' motivation and passion for teaching are significant factors for decreasing attrition (Thomson & Turner, 2015). Teachers' sustained commitment to teaching contribute to teachers remaining in the profession (Fransson & Frelin, 2016).

### **Inspired by Others**

Participants of this study reported that family members, teachers, and community leaders served as role models who inspired them to enter the profession. The data analysis from this study revealed that some African American women teachers were inspired by family members and former teachers, which expands the scope of existing literature. According to Randi and Zumwalt (2017) teachers are influenced by family members to choose teaching as a profession because it is part of the family's legacy of teachers. Many participants in this study voiced that it was important for them to continue the family legacy as a teacher. Olsen (2008) stated that teachers are inspired by women family members who were educators that supported their career choice to become a teacher.

Some participants in this study shared that their former teachers were role models for entering the teaching profession. They experienced their former teachers' passion for teaching which inspired them to be a teacher. Mihaescu (2019) asserted that former teachers influence teachers to enter the education profession to make a positive difference in students' lives through education. Teachers are inspired to be teachers because of their former teachers and formative schooling experiences (Tomšik, 2016). These studies corroborate that teachers are inspired by people who impacted them and were significant in their lives.

### **Support**

In the analysis of data African American women teachers felt that support is essential for remaining in the profession. This indicates that support from school

administration and colleagues are a portion of what motivates African American women teachers to stay in the profession. Furthermore, school administration and policymakers are key to retaining and supporting African American women teachers (see Farinde et al., 2016). Another element of African American women teachers' motivation is adequate financial support that alleviate financial strain and worry. Both present study and existing research coincide in suggesting that African American women teachers need support to remain in the profession. Campoli (2017) asserted that teachers need the support of school administration and fellow teachers to continue their teaching career. Another aspect of support for teachers are financial compensation packages that provide increases with incentive to remain in education (Bland et al., 2016).

### **Challenges**

African American women teachers' challenges emerged as prominent in this study and review of literature. Teachers leave the profession due to challenges such as enormous work responsibilities, which contributes to job dissatisfaction (Ingersoll et al., 2016). However, some African American women teachers shared that their challenges included not having a teachers' union, authoritarian administration, minimum acknowledgement, and limited creativity. As, Podolsky et al., (2017) posited, teachers exit and continue in the profession because of support, money, promotion, and career stability. There are no differences in teachers' motivation to stay in the profession based on ethnicity or gender. Therefore, congruent with results in this study, research acknowledged that teachers' challenges influence their decision to stay or leave the profession (see Bland et al, 2016). The findings from the study revealed African

American women public middle school teachers stay in the profession because they are motivated from their internal drive to make a difference in the lives of students despite challenges.

### **Theoretical Framework Implications**

The SDT theoretical framework focuses on the origins of human motivation and explains individuals' drive for fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT comprises six small theories of motivation. BPNT, which is one of these theories, addresses individuals' need for autonomy, competence, and connection to others to support their well-being to flourish (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Throughout the study participants' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was examined using BPNT. Therefore, SDT, and more specifically, BPNT provided a background to analyze participants' description of motivation.

Participants' need for autonomy, competence, and association with others in the profession are elements congruent with BPNT. These elements emerged from participants' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to remain in the profession as middle school teachers. All participants described their experiences as a drive to satisfy or fulfill a passion to teach and improve students' achievement. They expressed intrinsic motivation as a calling and a drive to impact student learning.

Some participants were extrinsically motivated to be a teacher because of their belief in God and inspiration from others. Furthermore, participants voiced that being competent in their subject matter and engagement in professional development activities motivated them to remain in education. Participants spoke of the need to be autonomous, but with the support of their school administration. Having autonomy allowed

participants to utilize their pedagogy style to promote students' learning. Participants felt a sense of freedom to teach and manage their classroom. The sources of motivation helped them face the challenges they experienced and were strong anchors to remain in the profession.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are some notable limitations of this study that can be used to inform future research projects on the intersection of African American teachers and their motivation to stay in the profession. First and foremost, this study was intended to capture the experiences of a homogenous sample of African American middle school female teachers who had, at least, 5 years of experience teaching in public school. Given this intention, the transferability of this study's findings is limited. For example, the results of this study may not be transferred to African American male teachers, African American teachers with fewer years in the profession, African American teachers in elementary or high school, or African American teachers working in private settings.

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study was expected to be limited geographically. This poses a limitation because it does not present a nationwide perspective of African American women public middle school teachers. Finally, I expected that potential for personal bias might be a limitation of this study. As an educator in North Carolina public schools, I have personal passion about the topic of investigation. However, I found that I was open and curious to make meaning based solely on the participants' shared opinions for this study. I bracketed my biases and used a reflective journal to prevent interfering with participants voicing their lived experiences.

### **Recommendations**

Future research can be conducted to explore African American public and private school teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. The voices of African American women teachers need to be heard to expand existing research for the purpose of reducing attrition and retaining teachers. I recommend that more African American women teachers be given opportunities to assist with the development of policies that support and protect teachers. Also, their input is needed for teachers' recruitment strategies. This provides an opportunity for African American women teachers' voices to be included in decision making strategies that could reduce teacher attrition.

The research results are qualitative and future research can be conducted using a quantitative research method. A longitudinal survey could be used to observe changes in participants behaviors over a period. In this study, face-to-face interviews with participants were conducted before and during the academic school year. Therefore, a longitudinal survey could present participants' differences throughout the academic year in response to their motivation to stay in the profession. It is recommended that continuous research focus on African American K-12 teachers, principals, and other administrators' voicing their motivation for staying in the profession.

### **Implications**

The findings from this research implies positive social change as new strategies are developed to retain teachers. Therefore, school districts could utilize the data analysis to understand what motivates teachers to remain in the profession. Hearing African American women teachers express motivation for staying in the profession may persuade

policymakers to create policies that support unionization and increase salaries. The findings could be used by North Carolina school districts' authorities to request for financial support from stakeholder and businesses to recruit and retain teachers. My study adds to the literature on teachers' motivation to stay in the profession because it explains African American women teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness to staying in the profession.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, African American women teachers' motivation to stay in the profession is crucial for understanding how to retain teachers. Their voices provided information that can be used by local school districts to support the retention of teachers. The data revealed that the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are key to African American women teachers' longevity in the profession. Further research is needed to focus on African American women teachers' lived experiences in education.

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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

## Research Questions and Interview Questions

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned participant Initial (First and Last): \_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction:** Thank you for being willing to participate in my research study. I am interested in understanding and describing African American women teachers' motivation for staying in the profession. Your participation is strictly confidential and only will be used for the purpose of this study. If you decide at any time during the interview that you no longer desire to participate you can discontinue this interview. Also, if there is anything that you do not desire to share you are under no obligation and can pass on any question. At the conclusion of our interview, I will give you \$25.00 as a token of my appreciation.

The interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes of your time. I will audio tape this interview so that I can transcript verbatim your responses. Only your first and last initials of your name will be assigned to your interview transcript. During the interview I will take notes and monitor the audio recorder to ensure that it is recording properly. I will email you your transcript to review for accuracy or necessary corrections. After reviewing your interview transcript, please make correction using track changes or different color font. Then email your interview correction back to me. I may contact you via email or phone for clarification or follow-up questions.

Today, I am interested in hearing your voice about your motivation to stay in the profession. So, please relax, feel free to be open and honest because this is a safe place of confidentiality. So, please share with me a little about your background. *Prompt: What college or university you attended?*

**Background questions:**

1. What is your age?
2. What is your marital status?
3. Do you have children? If so what are their gender and age(s)

4. What college or university did you attend?
5. What degree did you receive?
6. How many years have you been in the teaching profession?
7. What grade level and subject do you teach?

#### Research Questions 1

RQ1: How do African American women teachers describe lived experiences teaching in North Carolina public middle schools?

#### Interview Question for RQ 1

- a. What middle school grade level do you teach or have taught?
- b. What subjects do you teach or have taught?
- c. Have you taught at different schools? If yes how many?
- d. How long have you taught at your present school?
- e. Please tell me why you choose to become a teacher?
- f. Please tell me how you decided to be a middle school teacher in North Carolina public school.

#### Research Questions 2

RQ2: How do African American women teachers describe their motivation for staying in the profession?

#### Interview Question for RQ 2

- a. How do you determine a teacher is motivated to teach?
- b. What motivates you to teach?

- c. What motivates you to teach middle school students?
- d. Why do you stay in the education profession?

### Research Questions 3

RQ3: What are African American women teachers' motivation challenges to stay in the profession?

### Interview Question for RQ 3

- a. What challenges do you face being a middle school teacher?
- b. What support do you receive from your school or district to remain a motivated teacher? *Prompt: principal, administration, fellow teachers, parents*
- c. How do you motivate yourself?

Interview Closure: Thank you for your participation. Do you have any questions?

I would like to give you \$25.00 as token of appreciation. If you need to contact me with questions or concerns, contact me using the information on your invitation flyer and your copy of informed consent form.